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JANET

OR

GLANCES AT HUMAN NATURE.

THE SECOND OF
A SERIES OF TALES ON THE PASSIONS:

BY
THE AUTHOR OF "MISREPRESENTATION."

———And had she then no virtues,
Was she not wise, and chaste, and true?

———Oh no; envy had tainted all:
Like the foul worm that crawls and leaves it soil and noisomeness,
Marring the wholesome fruit.

OLD PLAY.

A: Tales should have a moral. A Tale without a moral is just as useless as an
warehoused house—a bankrupt's bond—an M. P.'s conscience—or a sue lady.
M.S.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.



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B. BENSLY, PRINTER.



PREFACE.

IN offering to the public eye the second Tale of a series I hope one day to see complete, I find myself impelled to say a word or two respecting its forerunner. For I would fain avow my heartfelt gratitude for all the favour and all the kindness it was that work's fortune to experience.

“Misrepresentation” was put on its ordeal under circumstances of a very adverse nature: the first production of a pen hitherto untried — entirely without

support and interest in those quarters where interest is most effectual—appearing at a moment when the market literally overflowed with works of fiction—there seemed but slender ground to hope it would escape the almost universal doom of writings thus unfavourably launched.

But a fairer destiny awaited it: the public shewed indulgence—the book made its way; and nothing now remains for me but to express my thankfulness, together with the hope that my present undertaking may meet as lenient judges as did my last.

Bath, January, 1839.

JANET;
OR
GLANCES AT HUMAN NATURE.

CHAPTER I.

SOME five or six and twenty years ago, the newspapers informed the world at large, and their acquaintance in particular, that Captain Berrington, of the Rifle Brigade, had led to the hymeneal altar, Eliza, relict of the late John Irving, Esq., and sister to Sir William Kingsbury, Bart., of Merton Lodge ——— shire.

VOL. I.

B

The friends of neither party received the intelligence with satisfaction : on the contrary, as the lady had a daughter on whom the greater portion of her very moderate fortune was settled—the gentleman, nothing but his commission, the marriage was universally considered highly imprudent. Mrs. Berrington's family, indeed, viewed the connection with so little pleasure that, from the period of its commencement, all intercourse between her and her nearest relatives was suspended. But this gave little annoyance to the offenders ; Captain Berrington, an easy, good-tempered man, seldom ruffled, never thoroughly discomposed, saw no cause for sorrow in being thus spared the mortification of occasional association with connections, whose position in society was greatly superior to his own ; while his lady, pretty, lively and young, found the constant change and gaiety of her present life so animating and agreeable, that

she was far from regretting her marriage or its consequences. The Berringtons were mutually attached, and would have been exceedingly happy had they been less restricted in their means ; for, in spite of many good resolutions, and an occasional act of self-denial, the close of each succeeding year found them with an increase of debt, and diminution of income.

At length, it became obvious some decisive measure must be adopted to ward off the impending ruin, and, after much deliberation and many an anxious thought, Captain Berrington fixed upon a plan that he hoped might answer the desired end, but which, while it involved the pain of separation, eventually led to no beneficial result. He exchanged into a regiment lately ordered on foreign service, and his lady established herself and her two daughters in a pretty small house at a well-frequented watering place.

The hope of rapid promotion had been his inducement; hers was, of course, economy; for she had heard that, at watering-places, people might live for nothing. But the event did not justify this expectation; on the contrary, thoughtless, inexperienced, and fond of amusement, her expenditure doubled, almost trebled, the allotted sum. Captain Berrington was scarcely more fortunate in his speculations: he did indeed gain a step in his profession, but, rendered incapable of further service by an attack of Ophthalmia, he returned home invalided, to find his wife as pretty and affectionate as ever—his little girl grown almost out of his remembrance—and his creditors clamorous.

The last mentioned troublesome gentry were pacified by the sacrifice of a most opportune legacy from a distant relative of Major Berrington's, a Mr. Thurlow. But this friendly bequest, although it came at so à propos a mo-

ment, proved in the end no advantage to the Berringtons. The temporary relief, thus afforded, appeared to give additional stimulus to the extravagance of this thoughtless couple; once, they had been brought out of difficulties by an unexpected turn of affairs, and, henceforth, vague hopes of similar good fortune were never wanting, to induce them to set prudence at defiance, and afford a decent excuse for fresh expenditure. But hope was always a deceiver (why is she painted as a woman?) Time passed on, relations of all sorts, near and distant, died, and no one followed Mr. Thurlow's praise-worthy example. If the Berringtons had been already wealthy they would have had legacies of ten, and twenty, and perhaps fifty, thousand pounds, for gold has an affinity to gold; but, as they did not belong to that favoured portion of the community, they had nothing but mourning rings, and not always those.

How all this would have ended it is impossible to say; most probably in utter ruin. The death, however, of his wife, served Major Berrington the two-fold purpose, of lessening his expenses and fully opening his eyes to the exceeding folly, or rather sinfulness, of his conduct, and once more he began seriously to endeavour the retrieval of his affairs. It appeared an almost hopeless task, and a less phlegmatic disposition would, perhaps, have sunk beneath the combined trials of ill-health, bereavement and poverty. But, although he had been tenderly attached to his late wife, and, strictly speaking, never entirely recovered her loss, Major Berrington was not a distracted mourner; in fact, the same buoyancy of temper that had contributed so materially to his embarrassments, now enabled him to support his affliction with greater apparent fortitude, than might, perhaps, have been evinced by a man of more real

strength of character, but less pliability of mind. How often do we give people credit for extraordinary patience and resignation when, in reality, their submission proceeds from constitutional apathy; they submit, because they have not energy to struggle—they are cheerful under affliction, because they either cannot, or will not, fully realize their loss.

CHAPTER II.

MAJOR Berrington's first care on the death of his wife, was to transmit her dying message of kind feeling to her brother, Sir William Kingsbury ; and, in reply, he received a proposal from the Baronet, to take charge of Janet Irving, Mrs. Berrington's daughter by her first marriage. The Major, who had been left sole guardian of the child, at first hesitated in agreeing to this offer ; he questioned Janet's finding a happy home amongst persons who had, hitherto, seemed to take so little interest in her. The

separation of the children, also, appeared objectionable ; but the Kingsburys were wealthy, they were likewise her nearest relatives, and, as they expressed an intention of befriending her, he did not feel himself justified in declining the overture. Having, therefore, exacted a promise that the sisters should meet occasionally, (how, was not settled) he delivered Janet over to her newly found relations, and then turned his whole attention to the arrangement of his affairs.

The sale of his commission might have proved the easiest and quickest mode of proceeding ; but, ever sanguine, Major Berrington still hoped he might sufficiently recover his eyesight, to admit of his engaging once more in active service ; he, therefore, set apart a portion of his income for the purpose of liquidating his debts, and resolved to live, and educate his daughter, on the mere pittance that remained. The first essay was made, by taking lodgings

in an obscure street in the county town, and, certainly, as far as economy was concerned, the plan answered well enough; but the child drooped; accustomed to the fresh air and freedom of the sea-side, she could not brook the confinement of a town; and, as they sat together in their little parlour, it was indeed a melancholy sight to watch her anxious father, himself, infirm and broken down, seeking to amuse and pacify, the restless, irritable child.

Ere very long, however, this tedious mode of life was exchanged for one better in unison with Major Berrington's taste, and less injurious to his daughter's health and disposition. One day, in glancing his eye over the county newspaper, his attention was caught by the following advertisement:—

DESIRABLE COUNTRY RESIDENCE.

To be let, and entered upon immediately, that most eligible cottage residence, charmingly situated in the delightful village of Atherley, and known as the Grange. It comprises dining and drawing-rooms,

study, five bed-rooms with dressing-rooms. Kitchen, servant's offices, coach-house, and stabling, with an abundant supply of water. This house, in every way suited for a small family, stands in about three acres of garden ground, and would be found worthy the attention of any gentleman wishing for a quiet residence in a genteel neighbourhood. N.B. To an eligible tenant, the above premises would be let on remarkably low terms.—Apply at Messrs. Stone, Solicitors, Brackwood. If by letter, post paid.

In addition to the low rent and country residence, there was a circumstance that rendered this notice particularly interesting to Major Berrington. A cousin of his, who had married the Rector of Atherley, since the death of her husband, still resided there, and as Mrs. Arnold was an excellent person, entirely devoted to her family, she would, he trusted, extend her maternal care to his own motherless child. No time, therefore, was lost in making the necessary application; and the result was considered satisfactory by one who had, in truth, but little pretention to fastidiousness.

Although dignified with the name of the "Grange," the place in question was nothing

more than an old-fashioned farm-house, occupied for many years by a sort of half gentlewoman, who was lately dead, and whose son now wished to let the place. He was not, however, inclined to put the premises into anything like order, and, willing to let them for a mere trifle to any person, who, requiring no improvements, did not object to dirty paint and white-washed walls; and who would undertake to keep up the garden in its present state: for this had been the old lady's hobby, and, from respect to her memory, her son wished it to remain unchanged. Now, as it happened that the house, in addition to being old-fashioned, was objected to, as exceedingly inconvenient by some people, and the expense of keeping in order three acres of flower-garden frightened others, notwithstanding the very moderate rent, and the extreme beauty of the situation, no one was willing to become the tenant. Major Berrington's offer

of taking the Grange for a term of years, at an even lower rate than had been originally asked, was, therefore, gladly acceded to, and he thought himself fortunate in the transaction. To him, the prospect of keeping up the garden was far from formidable : for if Major Berrington had a passion for anything, it was for flowers ; and now, cut off from his former occupations and associates, unable from his defective eye-sight to employ himself in study, he looked forward to his garden as a constant source of delightful amusement.

And such it proved—years passed away, and left their footsteps on the Grange and its inhabitants. The house became more dilapidated, Major Berrington more bent and feeble ; but the garden flourished—it had become a world, a perfect world, of sweets and beauty—still, amidst all the plants of loveliness, which grew beneath his fostering care, none might compete

with Georgina, his fairy child. Fairy is not, perhaps, quite the term I should have used in speaking of Georgina Berrington, unless, indeed, eyes that for ever beamed forth joy and happiness, a smile bright as a summer's day, and a voice whose sprightly accents vied with the rising lark's gay carol, might give her claim to such a comparison.

Since her removal from S —, Georgina's existence had indeed realised all that we image to our minds when we talk of happy childhood. Too young to enter into her father's anxieties, or to feel the loss of a mother she had already forgotten, she knew no draw-back to her felicity; her sky was cloudless, her path without a thorn. There was nothing to break the spirits, or lessen the gaiety, natural to her age; to unkindness in its remotest form she was a stranger. Even the restraints of education were unknown to her: for Major Berrington, although he loved

his daughter tenderly, with his usual supineness of disposition, shrunk from the troublesome task of imparting to a volatile child, that instruction he was too poor to purchase; and Mrs. Arnold, whose good sense might, perhaps, have suggested the propriety of adopting some plan more in accordance with the usual mode of bringing up young ladies, unfortunately died, shortly after Major Berrington settled at the Grange. It is true, Mrs. Arnold's place in her family was taken by an unmarried sister; but this lady found quite enough to do in managing five girls and one boy, without troubling her head about Georgina; who, meanwhile, grew a very lovely and sweet-tempered, but, of course, ignorant, girl.

Dear she was, however, to all around; the aged loved the sunny smile and buoyant footsteps, which recalled so gracefully what they themselves had, ere-while, been—and the young

loved her, for, though she wanted energy to *lead*, she was ever ready to follow, in the wildest frolic or the liveliest game. Maurice, too, Maurice Arnold, who, in all their rambles, held Georgina's hand, who lifted her so carefully over each stile and brook, who filled her hat with clustering nuts, or rosy apples, would softly kiss her glowing cheek, and wish his sisters had been more like her. And from this atmosphere of love, Georgina's disposition took its hue ; kindness, affection beamed around her, and tenderness became the main-spring of her being, the all-pervading tincture of her mind : to be beloved, had been her destiny ; to love, became her nature.

CHAPTER III.

ON the afternoon of one of those cold, biting December days, which occur during what is commonly, and very justly, called a black frost, two female figures were seen traversing the village of Atherley, in the direction of the Grange. The one, a bulky-looking person of about five-and-forty, attired in a dark brown cloth pelisse, tight and scanty, and, therefore, shewing to advantage the full proportions of her portly form; yawning black cloth boots,

and a straw bonnet, lined and trimmed with coquelicot. Her age, as I have said, might have been forty-five, but she had neither wrinkles nor grey hairs ; and, although the meanness of her apparel did not proclaim a flourishing state of finance, there was something in the *tout ensemble* that looked as if the world had not gone ill with her ; something, too, in the firm, determined manner in which she planted her ample foot upon the hard and ringing ground, which gave assurance strong, that it would require more than a trifle to knock her down, either morally or physically. In disposition, she was evidently a bustling, good - tempered, sturdy - minded person, who would make a fair resistance against all the evils of life. As for her condition, she might be the house-keeper from Sir Felix Wrighton's, or a half-gentlewoman, or the wife or widow of a better sort of tradesman.

Her companion presented a complete contrast to this buxom individual. A faded plaid cloak hung in loose folds about her spare, small figure; whilst a close bonnet, fastened under the chin with a sad-coloured ribbon, formed a fit frame-work to a set of features where the sharp red nose, pale cheeks, and melancholy mouth were ill-atoned for by an intellectual brow and piercing dark grey eye. She was clearly a would-be lady, and an old maid—in fact, Rebecca Rocket and Theresa Flagge, the two females who walked together in the direction of the Grange, on that cold, wintry afternoon, were both old maids. The first, the useful female already mentioned as presiding over the family of her deceased sister; the latter, a recent addition to the society at Atherley. Theresa had, until lately, resided with a brother; but, on his marriage, had found it expedient to transfer herself and chattels to

furnished apartments let by Mrs. Slopewell, Milliner, Mantua-maker, &c. The lodging consisted of a drawing-room, fourteen feet by twelve, and a closet, in which, by a good deal of management, a bed, chest of drawers, and chair, might be accommodated. The front room looked out upon the road, and faced the Bell Inn ; from the back, the admirers of fair prospects and sweet sounds and fragrant perfumes found each sense gratified by the close vicinity of a kitchen-garden, bounded by Farmer Stubley's farm-yard. Fifteen shillings a week was the rent charged, and that only as a favour to an old friend and customer ; the apartments being, according to Mrs. Slopewell, " so very pleasant and airy—town and country, all at once."

Theresa was a well-meaning person, who, had she not been poor, would never have been thought ridiculous ; she believed she did good

by writing moral and religious books, which, being handsomely bound and adorned with an attractive frontispiece, were intended as presents for young ladies. Some persons, it is true, averred that, but for the addition thus afforded to her very narrow income, Miss Flagge would have been less anxious for the improvement of her fellow-creatures ; whilst others remarked she must be either exceedingly conceited or censorious, or she would hardly have ventured so to criticise all the world ; and all agreed in thinking, that had she taken as much pains in detecting the beam in her own eye as she was wont to do in pointing out the motes of other people—Theresa would have been a more valuable member of society. Then, as there was a dash of sentiment about her, not altogether confined to the productions of her pen, there were not wanting those who said she would be nothing loth to change her

name and state. Perhaps they were not wrong, for she was poor, and *Flagge* is not euphonious.

With Rebecca it was widely different; she gloried in her *singularity*, and would not have changed it for the world, married life being, in her estimation, a very nauseous draught indeed, a vile compound of all that is bitter and detestable. An opinion that the bare suspicion of an impending marriage never failed to call forth, and which Theresa usually combated with much earnestness. Such had been the case on the day in question, when the report of a projected alliance between the proprietor of the only grocer's shop in Atherley with a young person from a neighbouring town had formed a topic of discourse.

"Well, well," said Rebecca, at length, "I hold to my old opinion, whoever marries makes a great mistake; for, if the marriage is a happy one, one or other of the parties is almost always

sure to die ; and, if people do not agree, why, I suppose even you, Miss Flagge, will own they had better have remained single. No, no ; no marrying ; no cat and dog life for me !”

“ Ah,” said Theresa, “ but woman wants protection ; the weakness of her nature renders her unfit to combat those stronger than herself, and she is trampled on.”

“ Pshaw !” interrupted Miss Rocket, “ pshaw ! I say ; a woman’s head is as good as a man’s, any day, and her tongue something better ; so let her stand up for herself, Miss Flagge, and she ’ll have no more occasion for a husband to protect her than a fish has of a cork jacket to save it from being drowned.”

They now reached the Grange, when Rebecca, throwing back the wicket, passed quickly along the little gravel-walk, lifted the latch of the house-door, and, entirely disregarding an expostulatory pull from her companion, entered

unannounced the room where Major Berrington was sitting.

"Well, Major," she said, dropping herself into an arm-chair, and taking off a tippet formed of the fur of some nondescript animal, "well, my dear Major, we are come to wish you joy. So old Sir William has taken himself off, at last?"

"Yes," said Major Berrington, in a serious tone, "Sir William has received his summons."

"And left your daughter, our dear Georgina, a legacy of five hundred pounds. Very handsome, indeed."

"Sir William has left my daughter a bequest of the sum you mention, and to Janet, he has bequeathed as many thousands," replied Major Berrington, with some acrimony; for he felt this unjust distinction between two equally near relations.

"Hem!" said Rebecca. "That is not quite fair, I think."

“ Indeed,” observed Theresa, “ it would appear very much the reverse. But we must avoid passing uncharitable censures ; these trials are often beneficial, and I doubt not our friend will display his wonted strength of mind on this painful occasion. ‘ Sweet are the uses of adversity.’ ”

“ Yes, yes, sweet enough, and bitter, too ; but you ’ll never persuade me, Miss Flagge, that Sir William has not acted very unfairly by Georgina ; it was my first opinion, and I maintain it still,” retorted Rocket.

“ Where is the charming girl ? ” enquired Theresa.

“ In the garden ; Mattocks, the sexton, came to beg for evergreens to decorate the church, and Georgina is gone with him to watch over and protect my favourites.”

“ Ah, there she is—lovely, interesting creature ! How gracefully she bounds along, like

some young startled fawn! Then, that Hebe countenance — that sparkling smile — ah, my much valued friend, what a treasure is such a child!"

Major Berrington smiled thoughtfully.— "Georgina is, indeed," he said, "a source of much happiness, but, at the same time, one of great anxiety."

"I 've often heard it remarked that *only* children are always objects of anxiety," replied Theresa.

"Ah!" said Rebecca, "when people talk of one child giving more uneasiness than a great many, it is my opinion that they know nothing at all about the matter; and if such persons had to manage a family of five girls and a boy, as I have, I 'll be bound they would very soon alter their tone."

"What is Georgina's exact age?" enquired Theresa, returning to the subject most likely to interest Major Berrington.

"Georgina was twelve years old on the eighth of last month."

"Is it possible? Twelve years old! Really, I should hardly have imagined it."

"Georgina looks her age, fully," said the matter-of-fact Rebecca; "or, rather, from being tall and stout, she looks older; but that's not of much importance. Provided a girl is strong and healthy, what matter how she looks?"

"Beauty," replied Theresa, "is always prepossessing—a passport to kindly feelings. Besides, in forming that connexion on which so much of woman's happiness depends, her personal loveliness is often of more weight than intellectual merit, or varied accomplishment."

"Yes, yes," observed Miss Rocket, "we all know how easily men are caught by a pretty face, and how soon they can forget it, too; in love with a woman one day, out of love the next: such, I hope, will never be Georgina's fate."

However, your speaking of accomplishments and intellect reminds me of something that occurred to my mind the moment I heard of the legacy. Don't you think, Major, Georgina would be all the better for a little schooling? She is past twelve years old, really too big to spend all her time romping about as she does. I declare, at this very moment, she is bowling little Bob Mattocks's hoop. Georgina, Georgina," she continued, tapping at the window, "Georgina, do remember that you are a young lady, not a great school-boy! Really, Major, it is time to break her of these tom-boy habits."

But Rebecca tapped in vain; Georgina did not, or would not, hear.

"Well," said Miss Rocket, returning to her seat, "I suppose we must not expect old heads on young shoulders. But, indeed, although, I am no advocate for making blue stockings of

girls (I mean nothing personal, Miss Flagge), although, I say, I am no advocate for making a blue stocking of a girl, still, I do think to have her grow up in utter ignorance is a mistake the other way. Now, Major, this legacy seems to be come on purpose that you may give Georgina a proper sensible education. One hundred pounds would do the thing handsomely, for, you know, Miss Braceback's charges, including extras, never exceed thirty pounds a year; and when Georgina has been three years under her care she will be quite an altered creature. You know what she has done for my nieces. I fear you don't like the idea of parting with your daughter," pursued the voluble Miss Rocket, observing that Major Berrington hesitated in his reply. "All natural, all very natural: still, as a parent, you must surely see it is your duty to sacrifice your wishes to Georgina's welfare. After all, the time will pass quickly enough;

and you may depend upon my nieces and myself to keep you from feeling dull. Miss Flagge, too," (with rather a sly glance) "will, I have no doubt, be all that is kind and neighbourly; so you had better let me mention your intention to Miss Braceback, when I settle her account. And, by the way, now I think of it, as there will be three girls out of the same family, so to speak, she really ought to take them, one with another, for five-and-twenty pounds apiece. I shall certainly suggest it."

"If," answered Major Berrington, "I should decide on sending Georgina from home, I hardly think I should place her under Miss Braceback's care."

"Why not? Where could you meet with a better school for the money? I am sure the improvement Susan has made in the last six months is quite astonishing."

"Major Berrington, probably, objects to public

education, altogether," said Theresa; "nor am I surprised. It is impossible the Mistress can attend to all the minutiae of character in so many young people so as to frame her instructions properly; the mixture is very objectionable; and, to preserve order in so large a family, it becomes imperative to establish a multitude of regulations, many of them trivial and apparently unnecessary; to evade which, becomes a constant endeavour with the pupils, who thus acquire habits of duplicity and artifice. In fact, you seldom meet with school-girls (I except your nieces, of course, Miss Rocket), you seldom, I say, meet with school-girls who are not greedy, vulgar and sly."

"Nothing is perfect," rejoined Rebecca, tartly, "if school-girls are what you say, I am sure there is little to be gained by home education: all young people, and old ones too, Miss Flagge, will bear improvement; children from school

may be vulgar and so on, but those who are brought up at home are just as apt to turn out conceited and selfish; how can it be otherwise, when they are made continually the first objects with both parents and governesses?"

"All children are selfish;" said Theresa.

"Not naturally, however;" replied Rebecca, who, although an old maid, was remarkably fond of children, and having herself been educated at a boarding-school thought it quite the thing; "children are not naturally selfish; they are made so by bad management. A child has no greater pleasure than to be useful; his little services are always readily given; he likes nothing so well as to be employed for others. It is true, children require encouragement, attention—but this proceeds from their constant sense of dependence."

Theresa was silent, but not convinced: she had a strong bias in favour of home education;

principally, I believe, in consequence of a half-formed resolution of undertaking the onerous duties of private tuition, should a situation, embracing every comfort and a large salary, present itself; for, independent of other advantages, she had observed that, somehow or other, the majority of governesses contrived to meet with suitable mates.

Rebecca paused for breath, then continued: "Besides, where do you meet with a governess in any way calculated for her situation, or who remains in it? Are not the governesses of the present day very much in the style of the servants, for ever leaving their places and flying about the world like stage coaches? Formerly, a governess remained for years in her situation and became almost one of the family; but now, she goes through nearly as many hands as a five pound note."

"May not the parents be to blame?" answer-

ed Theresa. "They expect to see their children become prodigies—are disappointed; and quite forget the fault is just as likely to lie on one side as the other."

"In some instances, perhaps. But, if the remark held good in all, you would find parents as fastidious with regard to schools; this, however, is not the case; for while you hear, perpetually, of a change of governesses (indeed I scarcely ever knew a girl educated at home who had not undergone a succession of them,) children brought up at school seldom make any change beyond that, perhaps, of being removed to a more expensive one, as they grow older and require finishing. Nor do I see how it can be otherwise; for who are the persons who go out as instructors? Generally speaking, the daughters of tradespeople, who, in consequence of having been educated at the very schools so much reprobated, imagine themselves capable

of undertaking the most arduous charge; one too, for which, in nine cases out of ten, they are no more fit than a mouse is to draw a wheelbarrow. I don't mean to deny that some most exemplary and accomplished governesses may be met with; but the majority of young persons, who thus employ themselves, have, I firmly believe, entirely mistaken their vocation."

"Still," remarked Theresa, "I must confess, I lean towards a home education; why should so much depend upon the governess? At least, where the number of children is not too great, may not the parent's eye be sufficient?"

"Parents are proverbially blind," replied Rebecca.

"You take no part in this discussion," said Theresa, gently, to Major Berrington; who, in despair of edging in a word, had fallen into a brown study.

"The argument has been so ably supported on both sides that, in truth, nothing remained for me but to sit by and listen," he replied, with a gallant bow to both ladies.

"But, after all," said Theresa, imagining, from the coldness with which he had met Rebecca's proposal, that Major Berrington had no intention of profiting by her advice; "after all that can be said upon the subject, after weighing most carefully the respective merits of home or scholastic education, it must be confessed the evils and difficulties on both sides are immense; and that either is a disagreeable experiment, and perhaps, needless expense. Boys must be educated; but girls would probably be just as well, and happy, and useful, were the cultivation of the mind less attended to. Indeed, I think, we carry our notions of female acquirements and accomplishments quite beyond the mark; our mothers and grandmothers, compared to

the young ladies of the present day, would have appeared perfect ignoramuses; yet, they made excellent wives and mothers, and I question whether any of the all-accomplished modern young ladies would understand the management of a household half'so well."

"You are no advocate for female Crichtons, I see, Miss Flagge;" observed Major Berrington.

"Far from it; so far, indeed, that I have been induced to bring the subject forward in a little work I am now preparing; and I hope to prove that both health and happiness are seriously injured by the present system of education."

"If," said Rebecca, "you mean to say we are to go back to the old one, and place our girls on the level of their great grandmothers, I beg to observe you will not have me on your side; for, notwithstanding the hue and cry that is raised against modern attainments, and although I believe the matter is sometimes carried

too far—I consider we have made both an improvement and an advance. What, I should like to know, were women fifty years ago? And how did they employ themselves? They wrote and read their own language (not always very grammatically); understood a few words of French—if the voice and ear were good, played and sung a little—those who lived in the country were mighty in the mysteries of pies and puddings, pickles and preserves: in towns, dress was the grand object of their thoughts, the business of their lives. They believed in dreams, and consulted fortune-tellers, swam minuets, flirted fans, curtsied gracefully, read Tom Jones and the Sorrows of Werter. Those who were industriously inclined worked tent-stitch; those who were not, paid visits and played cards. Now, in what respect were they better than the girls of the present day?”

“Very little, certainly, if your picture be not overdrawn,” said Major Berrington.

"But," observed Miss Flagge, "in the cultivation of the head, do we not now sometimes overlook the heart? Our grandmothers were punctilious in the performance of all their duties, both social and religious; while the young people of our time are brought up to think of nothing beyond themselves and their accomplishments."

"Well, well," replied Rebecca, "there's no use looking for perfection in this world; if we do, we shall only lose our time. We all know there's good and bad in everything; so I hope, Major, you'll think over what I've been saying about Miss Braceback: for, rely upon it, whatever might have been forty or fifty years ago, ignorance won't do now."

Major Berrington, again appealed to, found himself constrained to make some reply; but his answer rather accorded with his own previous train of thoughts than with the discus-

sion between the fair disputants. Georgina's education, he could not deny, had been very much neglected; still he would not consider this a subject of regret. We never like to own an error even where it has been in some measure involuntary.

"I have," he said, "a very great dislike, almost a dread, of premature education. Forced plants are always sickly, and infant prodigies seldom realise the expectations they have raised. Besides, by early cramming the brain with knowledge, you weigh down the imagination, and destroy all originality of mind. The constant habit of *teaching*, without which, early education will not go on, is also injurious; it prevents a spirit of enquiry, and, for want of exertion, the faculties become feeble: it is like carrying a child, instead of making him find out for himself the way to use his limbs. Assist a child to learn, but do not *teach* him every-

thing; let him teach himself, and, though he may be backward at twelve years old, he will not at twenty. If there be real talent, it will not require so much cultivation; and, if there be not, you are throwing away both time and trouble—your pupil will turn out a parrot, but nothing more.”

“Major, I perfectly agree with you,” remarked Miss Flagge. “With regard to a girl’s education, your observations are peculiarly judicious; for, in addition to all you have advanced, I question whether, after all the pains taken, time spent, the money lavished in acquiring accomplishments, girls are rendered at all more attractive. I really believe men are much more apt to dread, than admire, an accomplished woman.”

“That appears to me of very little importance,” answered Rebecca; “the fewer marriages the better, say I; and, if a girl isn’t to

be admired because she happens to have more than two ideas in her head, it is no great consequence. A woman, whose mind is well cultivated, and time properly employed, will care very little whether people fall in love with her or not. And that's one reason, Major, why I wish you would not let Georgina run wild in this sort of way. You will look foolish enough, if, some three or four years hence, she should come and tell you she is breaking her heart for her cousin Maurice, and then, to prove it, runs off to Gretna Green with him; provided, indeed, she doesn't break her leg in jumping out of the window."

Major Berrington looked half offended; and Theresa made a long speech about the impossibility that Georgina should ever thus requite her father's indulgence.

"Well, well," interrupted Rebecca, as she rose to depart, "the best way to prevent an

evil is to guard against it; so again I say, Major, think over my advice; if Georgina is busy at Miss Braceback's, learning whatever a young lady ought to learn, she 'll have no time for falling in love. Come, Miss Flagge, it's time for us to move."

It was observed that both Miss Rocket and Miss Flagge left the Grange with rather heightened complexions: Rebecca, not altogether pleased at the disrespect with which her counsels had been treated; Theresa, fluttered with the excitement of strengthened hope; for she firmly believed Major Berrington had been convinced by her arguments; she was, therefore, gaining an ascendancy over his mind. And they spent the remainder of the day, Rebecca, in lamenting the obtuseness of some people, especially of *men*: Theresa, meditating on the delightful effects of female influence, and the great benefit and advantage it had always

proved to the whole human race. No doubt Theresa also thought it possible, or more than possible, her's might, ere long, shew itself by its effects : that is to say, she began to hope the day was not far distant when the Grange and its inhabitants would own her sway.

Really, gentlemen should be cautious how they conduct themselves when thrown in contact with single ladies.

CHAPTER IV.

MAJOR BERRINGTON did think over Miss Rocket's suggestion; the result, however, of his cogitations was not a verdict in favour of Miss Braceback, but a letter to Janet, begging that the terms of the lady under whose care she then was might be forwarded to him; which was done without any considerable delay. The amount of Miss Maxwell's charges startled Major Berrington, and called forth a torrent of invectives against the absurdities of modern

education from Miss Flagge. Rebecca took the opposite side of the question; as, indeed, was usual with her; for, although these two ladies, from habit, or mutual convenience, were constantly together, and were even actually attached, they seldom or never agreed on any one subject.

“It was true,” observed Rebecca, “Miss Maxwell’s charge was high, very high; more than three times as much as Miss Braceback’s, and double what Mrs. Price asked; although Mrs. Price’s was decidedly a first-rate school, and patronised by some of the first families in the county. Sir John Hawkesley, for instance, after Lady Hawkesley’s death, sent his daughter to Mrs. Price; and the Miss Trefoils, whose father had left fifty thousand pounds to each of his children, had been entirely educated by Mrs. Price. Still Mrs. Price’s was only country, while Miss Maxwell’s was town, education; and, if peo-

ple want London goods, they must make up their mind to pay London prices. Very likely two years at Miss Maxwell's would do as much for Georgina, as four at either of the other schools. Besides, Lady Kingsbury had added a kind message, expressing her approbation of the plan, as well as readiness to receive Georgina during the holidays, in case the distance should render her return to Atherley, inconvenient; and it was very important she should know something of her mother's family."

Rebecca's eloquence proved more effectual on the present, than on the former, occasion; the latter reasoning, especially, was conclusive; and, towards the end of January, Major Ber- rington proceeded to London, deposited his daughter at Miss Maxwell's, consulted an eminent oculist concerning his failing eye-sight, and, finding there was not a shadow of hope of his again being equal to active service, disposed of his commission.

We must now say a few words of Janet Irving, whose lot had been a very different one from Georgina's. Notwithstanding the agreement stipulated by Major Berrington respecting an occasional meeting between the sisters, from a variety of trifling causes, the separation had hitherto remained unbroken; all affection, therefore, that Janet might have cherished for Georgina must have faded, even had her sentiments partaken of that deep and holy love sister should feel for sister. But, alas! they were of a widely different cast. Mrs. Berrington, weak and injudicious, had openly preferred her youngest daughter: young as she was, Janet observed the preference so foolishly displayed; and the seeds of jealousy, thus early sown, choked and destroyed all better feelings towards her little rival. Nor was the impression ever afterwards effaced: indeed, I believe, that the mind once tainted with envy, rarely recovers

a more healthy tone; the stain is indelible; the bias, impossible to change—all is thenceforth seen through a distorted medium, and judged according to false assumptions.

Neither the lapse of years, nor her early education, gave a more amiable complexion to Janet Irving's mind. She formed one of her uncle's family, but she was dependent; she was an object of care, not love—of anxiety, not solicitude; she resided at Merton Lodge, but not as the daughter of the house; her wants were little heeded—her wishes still less; in all things she was secondary to her cousin Marcus. Thus chilled by the absence of affection, Janet's disposition became clouded with discontent, wrapped up in selfishness; and often, from the midst of her comparatively splendid home, would she envy Georgina's humbler, but far more happy, lot. She became deceitful, too, for the unloved child is seldom frank—the envious person ever

wears a mask—and mistrustful, for, in accordance with the old adage, she formed her estimate of others by herself.

In this manner were the characters of both sisters injured: Georgina, reared with an excess of tenderness, grew inert and weak; incapable of thinking, or acting for herself; an easy dupe—a ready tool—Janet, on the contrary, was full of energy; but it was all selfish; she felt herself an object of affection to no one living creature, and in return she cared for no one—lived but for herself.

Miss Irving's education had been sedulously attended to: she was placed at a popular school in the neighbourhood of London, and, during the vacation shared the instruction of her cousin's tutor; and, being naturally clever and fond of admiration, her progress in the multifarious branches of female education was rapid. She danced well, walked well, was a good musician,

spoke French fluently, knew a little Italian, a little German ; and *professed* to understand astronomy, chemistry, natural philosophy, geology, mineralogy, conchology, botany, dress and mathematics.

Her plausible, insinuating manner rendered Janet a great favourite with her young companions ; while the circumstance of her being the niece of Sir William Kingsbury, of Merton Lodge, secured the favourable opinion of the head of the establishment. But, although this species of popularity might gratify her vanity, it went no further : it could not touch her heart, nor call forth that general feeling of good will to others, which arises from the happy consciousness that we ourselves are objects of affection. And when she heard her school-fellows expatiating on the delights of their respective homes, the indulgence of their relatives, the pleasure their return would give to parents, sisters,

brothers—Janet bitterly remembered that, at Merton, her presence would be acquiesced in, not cherished ; and that all her amusements would depend on a capricious school-boy, whose every wish was gratified, even forestalled, while hers were neither asked nor thought of.

Such was Janet at the period when, after the lapse of many years, she found herself once more an inmate of the same household with her sister. It was a sad grief to poor Georgina, when she exchanged her life of happy idleness for the restraints and dull formalities of Miss Maxwell's establishment ; and found herself surrounded by strange companions, who looked down upon the country girl ; and fault-finding teachers, whose exclamations of surprise at her excessive ignorance were only varied by endeavours to stimulate her diligence : she, who had never learnt—had been but seldom blamed—whose existence had been hitherto so free and joyous.

But time brought a remedy to this, as he will do to every sorrow. Georgina's abilities were excellent, and great her diligence; for the length of time she was to remain from home depended upon the progress she should make. One advantage, too, in Miss Maxwell's eyes (it was no mean one) resulted from her former desultory mode of life; there was nothing to be unlearned, no vicious system to be broken through; if the soil were uncultivated, still was it free from weeds. Her sweet temper and gaiety won the good-will of all, and when the Midsummer vacation came she was the favourite with every class—mistress, masters, and pupils. Janet was no longer the most popular girl in the establishment—Georgina had supplanted her; and thus materially increased her former unsisterly feelings.

The holidays, which, in accordance with Lady Kingsbury's proposal, Georgina spent at

Merton Lodge, rendered her a further object of jealousy. Lady Kingsbury did not, it is true, take so decided a fancy to her late husband's youngest niece as to afford grounds for apprehension that she might one day usurp her eldest sister's place; but Georgina passed her life far more agreeably than Janet: for, while the younger was allowed full liberty and spent her time in gardening, strolling about the grounds and riding donkeys with her cousin Marcus, the elder seldom obtained leave to quit the drawing-room: and as Miss Irving, who entertained no real sentiment of attachment towards Lady Kingsbury, found the confinement exceedingly irksome, she failed not to draw comparisons between herself and the more fortunate Georgina. But, beyond occasional slight attempts to disparage her rival, no evidence of jealousy betrayed itself; on the contrary, her manner evinced the most affectionate regard

which was tenderly reciprocated by the warm-hearted, totally unsuspecting girl.

Thus passed three years; when Miss Irving having entered her eighteenth, and Georgina completed her fifteenth year they left Miss Maxwell's establishment: Janet, to take her place in society as niece to Lady Kingsbury, to mingle in the world and try her chance of matrimony; Georgina, to return to her country home and innocent enjoyments. The parting was marked by tears on the one side, and expressions of regret on the other; by promises of frequent visits and letters.

Perhaps, for once, Miss Irving was not altogether insincere: she could not remain quite untouched by the affection of one whom it was no longer possible to envy, who could in no way, henceforth, clash with her; whose prospects were so inferior, who was for life condemned to the vulgarity of a remote country

in the world of fashion and of gaiety—indent, beautiful, and accomplished—must
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and, in all probability, would crown a suc
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would one day glitter on her brow.

Janet's expectations, however, like t
pectations of many other persons of h
of life, were not fulfilled. Although s
presented at Court, and although Lady
bury, fond of gaiety, and glad of an ex
entering into the world, gave balls and
parties, patronised fancy fairs and n
concerts, promoted pic-nics, even we
length of taking half an opera-box—al
that had been a woman

imagined twice as wealthy as, in reality, she was; the favourite object of her hopes remained as far off as before. The season passed; no offer worthy of acceptance had been made; it was clear her expectations must be lowered; a Baronet should be the object of her choice, and, during the autumnal vacation, Sir Marcus underwent an exceedingly hot siege. But Sir Marcus was impregnable; he even carried his lack of gallantry so far as to observe, on more than one occasion, in Miss Irving's presence, "that, for his part, he was utterly at a loss to understand how any man could marry a first cousin; and that, if he ever did any-thing so foolish, Georgina Berrington should be the girl:" a declaration which sealed the fate of Georgina Berrington's promised visits to Merton Lodge.

She, meanwhile, was spending her time very much to her own satisfaction, and her father's comfort; but to the almost entire obliteration

of all she had acquired whilst under Miss Maxwell's tuition. It is true, Rebecca remonstrated, and Charlotte Arnold encouraged, and Maurice endeavoured, by presents of books and music, to allure her into more industrious habits. All was in vain; for a time, perhaps Georgina would shake off her desultory ways, and practise, read, and write, steadily enough; but the impression speedily wore off, and she became as idle as before. What was the use of spending hours at the piano, when her father preferred the full, rich tones of her melodious voice without even the simplest accompaniment? Besides, his increasing infirmity rendered her services so necessary, he could, she was sure, ill spare the time it would take to keep up her knowledge of French, or acquire that of Italian. People are seldom slow to find excuses for the indulgence of their favourite propensities; it would be well were all such pretexts as correct

and amiable as those Georgina pleaded in defence of hers.

At sixteen she was pronounced, by the few gentlemen who had an opportunity of seeing her, "an exceedingly fine girl." The ladies acknowledged she was pretty, very pretty; but regretted her appearance of robust health, and inclination to embonpoint.

"If it were not for her height," observed Mrs. Daymour, "Miss Berrington would certainly be too stout. As it is, I am sadly afraid she will grow coarse; and her complexion, although certainly very brilliant, is, in my opinion, almost too high. Don't you think, my dear Lady Wrighton, Miss Berrington has too much colour?"

"*She* does not think so, at any rate," replied Lady Wrighton, "or she would endeavour to break herself of that vulgar habit of blushing so continually."

“It is really to be lamented some one does not give her a few hints on the subject ;—nothing is more unbecoming than a perpetual rush of blood to the face—it almost infallibly leads to a red nose.”

“It is a great pity she has no mother !”

“Very great, indeed. I never suffer my daughters to blush, except on receiving an offer of marriage, and then, you know, a slight increase of colour is not only graceful, but unavoidable.”

“If Miss Berrington is to reserve her blushes for those occasions, her complexion stands in little danger ; ours is certainly not a marrying county.”

“No, indeed,” sighed Mrs. Daymour, who was blessed with five single daughters ; “and while so many beautiful und accomplished girls remain unmarried, I should think Miss Berrington, with her coarse hands and sunburnt

skin, will hardly find herself called upon."

"Do you know, mama," exclaimed Miss Daymour, "I should not be surprised if Georgina Berrington were to become quite the rage."

"I should," replied mama.

"Very likely she will carry off the palm, merely because she is so different from us all. She is just the style of beauty the gentlemen admire, besides being, it is said, good-tempered to a fault—another great perfection in their eyes."

"All fools are good-tempered," observed Mrs. Daymour.

"Georgina's eyes are not those of a fool."

"Her mouth is. I declare that eternal simper, or *smile*, I suppose she would call it, perfectly irritates my nerves."

"Because," rejoined the daughter, in a low tone, "it serves to shew a set of the whitest

teeth imaginable." Then, urged either by the spirit of contradiction to her mama, or rather, perhaps, by a feeling of pity towards an unoffending girl, Miss Daymour added, "I understand her voice in singing is very beautiful, and, to judge by a few notes I caught last Sunday—"

"My dear Sarah," interrupted Mrs. Daymour, "I am really sorry your thoughts are not better regulated. What is this young person's singing to you, may I enquire? Can you find no other occupation for your mind during church-time than listening to the coarse, loud tones of a girl like Miss Berrington?"

"When we were in town, mama, you rather encouraged my attending the Catholic chapel on account of the music, which would, you said, improve my taste, and perhaps save the necessity of my taking any more singing lessons."

"That is quite another question."

"Is Miss Berrington's singing really good?" enquired the hostess; "my uncle, Lord Lineageleigh, whom I expect to join our party this evening, is almost music mad; and, if I thought her singing worth listening to, I would ask her over for a day or two. It is true, I have not called there since the general election, but such people have no right to give themselves airs; she would, of course, be too happy to come and make herself useful. Is she worth hearing?"

"Indeed, I cannot say," replied Mrs. Daymour; "but this I do know, that there is great danger in introducing such a person into a house where there are young men. These sort of half-bred girls are always deeply artful; and there is no saying where the mischief may end. I would not answer for Lord Lineageleigh himself."

Unkind as were these criticisms, not altogether ill-founded. Georgina's beauty was precarious; a few shade of colour, a slight increase of embonpoint was gone; she would become clumsy, vulgar-looking. The timidity, also, with the blood rushing to her cheeks and rendered her movements in the presence of strangers, awkward and restrained; the smile that played so often round her mouth, cloyed from its very sweetness. But she will not always smile; her brow speaks of sadness—her dark eyes, feeling; and they think and feel, in this bleak world, know more of tears than smiles.

CHAPTER V.

"PAPA!" exclaimed Georgina, when sauntering with her father in the garden, one lovely summer evening, "Papa, here is Maurice; and, looking so worn and fagged, he must surely have travelled all night."

The next moment they were joined by a tall, slight young man, whose extreme delicacy of appearance was heightened, rather than otherwise, by the bright hectic colour which tinged his hollow cheeks.

"Maurice, my boy, I'm glad to see you back again," said Major Berrington, warmly shaking the young man's hand, whilst Georgina gazed anxiously and affectionately on his wasted countenance. "I'm glad to see you back again; only regret I cannot wish you joy. But don't let this check damp your spirits; remember, there is a light and a dark side to every subject: the more frequently the ball is struck down, the higher will be the rebound at last."

"Aye," thought Maurice, with all the sickening hopelessness of disappointment, "if it be not struck down for ever."

"And how came you to lose the situation, after all?" inquired Georgina.

"It had been promised long ago, to a protégé of Lord Lineageleigh's, in return for some political service. I never even had a chance."

"Well," said the Major, "we can't deny it's a disappointment, a very great disappointment

you have met with, particularly as the climate might have suited you. But don't let your spirits droop ; it is something to feel you have not lost the place by any failing of your own."

"Thank you, my dear sir, for your expressions of kindness. I feel them much ; believe me, if any thing could blunt the edge of my mortification, it would be the certainty, or, at any rate, the hope, there are yet those who feel interested in a defeated candidate."

As he spoke, Maurice looked towards Georgina, who, for sole answer, placed her hand in his.

"You will take tea with us ?" enquired Major Berrington.

"Hardly. I have been travelling for the last four-and-twenty hours, and am, I fear, not quite the thing to join a lady's tea-table."

"Pooh, pooh. Georgina doesn't know how a man looks, nor what he has got on. Come

in, come in, make no apologies. You found all well at home, I know."

"I have not yet been there," rejoined Maurice, slightly reddening.

"Not been there! Why you must have passed the very door. But perhaps you know they have got a party, one of your aunt Rocket's parties; tea, talk, and turn-out, she calls them; tea, gossip, and scandal, say I. So come in, you will be a hundred times more comfortable with us; and if you think they will be expecting you, we can send down and tell them you are here. What do you think of doing, since the appointment is no longer to be thought of?"

"I must revert to my original intention, the endeavour to settle myself, as physician at Marston."

"Well," said Major Berrington, "I dare say that, with the exception of the climate, you

will find it the best plan of the two. At any rate you will be among friends who are selfish enough to be glad to keep you ; at least, I am, for one."

"Maurice," said Georgina, pausing at the glass door which led into the old-fashioned sitting room ; "I am even more selfish than papa : I do not feel the least regret that we are not to lose you. Do you know, I have missed you so much, I have almost counted the days until your return ; and if I have felt this short separation thus keenly, how would it have been when you were gone for years ? So I am glad, quite glad, you have not succeeded. Now scold me for my selfishness."

But Maurice would have felt this no easy task, for, as Georgina spoke, her expression of countenance was even more affectionate than her words. He looked for one short moment on her eyes, so soft and yet so speaking—then,

rapidly withdrew his own—and a dark shadow crossed his sickly brow; for, with all the sharp quick-sightedness of love, he saw and felt that, while his cousin was the object of his heart's homage, he was to her a brother, a dearly cherished brother, but nothing further.

“By the bye, Maurice,” said Major Ber-
rington, as they sat round the plenteously
supplied table, for with them the evening meal
was a repast of some importance, “did you see
anything of Georgina’s fine relations, when
you were in town? I mean the Kingsburys.”

“I called in Bruton Street repeatedly; and
once was fortunate enough to find Lady Kings-
bury at home.”

“Did you see Janet, too?” eagerly inquired
Georgina.

“Yes; Miss Irving was sitting with Lady
Kingsbury when I was admitted.”

“And were you not enchanted with her? Is

she not beautiful? Tell me all about it, Maurice.
Did you speak much together?"

"But little; Miss Irving's attention was occupied with other visitors."

"Other visitors!" said Georgina, with a slight tone of disappointment.

"Yes, Georgy, with other visitors, who were perhaps less countrified than I am."

"Some admirer probably," good-humouredly observed Major Berrington.

"But, at any rate," replied Georgina, "Janet surely found time to ask for us, for my father—for me? And has she sent no message, no letter in reply to mine?"

"Lady Kingsbury made many enquiries, and perhaps Miss Irving reserved hers, knowing she would soon have an opportunity of making them in person. Lady Kingsbury talks of paying you a visit."

"My aunt, and Janet, coming here?" cried

Georgina, "oh, how delightful! Papa, papa, do you hear what Maurice says? Janet is coming⁴ at last, to see us: actually coming to Atherley—so very kind. But when, Maurice, when will they come? Is every thing settled, the day fixed? How soon will it be? Tell me—tell me, when you think we may expect them."

"Not at all, Georgina, in all probability," said Major Berrington.

"My dear papa, you have not been listening, and do not understand. Maurice is it not fixed, positively decided on?"

"Certainly,—Lady Kingsbury spoke confidently of coming to Atherley, when her town engagements will permit; or, rather I should say, when what is called the season is over."

"Aye;" replied Major Berrington, "but there is a wide difference between words and deeds; as you will find e'er you are ten years' older, Georgina. I should as soon expect a visit from

one of the royal family as from Lady Kingsbury."

But Major Berrington was entirely mistaken, it was Lady Kingsbury's full intention to spend a few weeks at Atherley ; for her son, now of age, had, on taking possession of his property, notified to his mama, in a most dutiful manner, that, excepting as an occasional and *invited* guest, her presence at the lodge would henceforth be dispensed with. And she, not knowing exactly where to bestow herself in the interval occurring between the close of the London Season, and that period of the year when house rent falls and company becomes select at watering places, was of a sudden seized with a great wish to see something of the dear Berringtons ; and informed her acquaintance, right and left, that she was under an engagement to spend a month in ———shire.

"Hitherto, out of regard to Sir Marcus's

interests," lady Kingsbury said, " she had made a point of residing on the estate ; and had in consequence neglected many of her old friends and acquaintances ; but, as she was no longer necessary at Merton, she meant to gratify her inclinations by accepting invitations she had hitherto thought it her duty to decline."

Had Lady Kingsbury known precisely the sort of place to which she was about to consign herself, niece, man and maid-servant, it is very possible she would have preferred Janet's scheme, of making a short continental trip. But persons who have been always surrounded by wealth and luxury seldom realise the privations of poverty. Lady Kingsbury knew Major Berrington was not rich, and did not certainly expect to find him occupying a palace, but "the Grange" sounded well, and gave to her mind the image of a comfortable, substantial dwelling, with an establishment to corres-

pond; in fact, a fitting residence for a gentleman of moderate income; not, as it was in truth, a dirty, dilapidated farm-house, with one only servant to enact the various duties of house-maid, cook, parlour and lady's maid.

To Georgina's infinite delight, therefore, a few days after Maurice's return from town, a letter was received from Janet, apprising the inhabitants of the Grange that, in compliance with her earnest entreaties, Lady Kingsbury proposed spending a fortnight or three weeks with them, provided Major Berrington was quite at liberty to receive her. The Major's vexation on learning this intention nearly equalled his daughter's enchantment: for though, perhaps, he saw but half the deficiencies of his menage, there was in that half quite sufficient to assure him that a person of Lady Kingsbury's class must find herself exceedingly uncomfortable whilst under his roof;

and gladly would he have caught at any reasonable pretext for warding off what could not but prove a very great and mutual inconvenience. But no excuse, short of a downright falsehood, presenting itself, there remained nothing but, as Miss Rocket said, "to make the best of a bad business."

"As for accomodating Lady Kingsbury here, as she would be with some of her own great acquaintances," observed Rebecca, "you know, Major, it's quite out of the question, and we must not expect it. It certainly is very tiresome she should have taken this freak into her head; but, as we can't help her coming, we must do what we can to make her comfortable whilst she is here. But don't fret, Major, don't fret; it will go off better than you think for. At any rate, if there's a day for Lady Kingsbury's coming, there will be one, too, for her going; and if she doesn't like her quarters, perhaps

she'll change them all the sooner. So now let us see what can be done. You must have our boy, Timothy, to wait; and you will want more forks and spoons, which we can lend you; wax-lights also, of course, Lady Kingsbury never burns anything but wax. Georgina will want a new dress or two, the piano must be tuned; Maurice shall send the man over from Marston; and if he could hire a sofa it would be as well, I dare say Lady Kingsbury lies down all day, and goes to sleep after dinner: fashionable people are so indolent. That bell-string must be mended, and the lock of the bed-room door looked at, it won't close now without slamming, which is considered vulgar. The paper in this room is shockingly dirty, but there's not time to put up new; besides, it would make the paint look worse than ever, so we must content ourselves with a good cleaning; in fact, the whole house must have that; I shall come

yourself a new coat and waistcoat could only dispense with that I shade! You cannot—well then, in must make you a new one; I can when I get her dresses.”

This was, in truth, an occasion Rebecca’s neighbourly feelings b when her good nature appeared i and her exertions without li Georgina, and Charlotte Arnold garden of its choicest treasures un a perfect green-house of the li room, and poor Major Berrington unsettled, wandered about like an u wishing her Ladyship had been pl any other friend but him; Miss l

puddings, took down and put up beds and window curtains, darned carpets, tablecloths and sheets; and nearly broke her neck, in consequence of falling from the steps she had ascended, for the purpose of removing the dust from a picture of Mrs. Berrington, which hung over the chimney piece. Rebecca's beauty was not much improved by her tumble; but that was a circumstance of very little importance in her estimation: she made light of the accident, washed away the blood which streamed from her upper lip, tied a piece of brown paper steeped in vinegar on her forehead, then, declaring she was as well as ever, returned to her good-natured labours.

Nor was Theresa behind-hand in offices of good-will; a silver tea-pot and cream ewer, formerly belonging to her mother, were, with many cautionary injunctions, transferred to the custody of the Berrington's uni-domestic; and

a cut-glass smelling bottle filled with lavender water, an album containing effusions of her own, a number of the Keepsake, together with a handsomely bound edition of Marmion, were placed upon the drawing-room table.

CHAPTER VI.

At length came the day for this much expected and greatly deprecated visit.

“Well, Major,” said Rebecca, seating herself near the open window, and using her ample pocket-handkerchief for a fan, “I’ve done all I can for you now, I think, and may as well take myself off. Be sure you send over, if you happen to want me, or if anything goes wrong. But I really don’t see how that can be, I’ve explained all so particularly to Sarah, and made

Timothy say over his instructions five times. I don't think there can be any mistakes, and if Sarah doesn't over-roast the beef, or send the fish up half raw (a thing cooks are very apt to do), or burn the tart, Lady Kingsbury will have no reason to find fault with her dinner. Georgina, my dear, isn't it time for you to be going to dress? You know you should be dressed before your Aunt comes. Major, you won't forget about the wine? You know it's standing in a bucket in the back court to keep it cool, I've told Timothy. And in case anyone drinks ginger beer pray give him a hint to turn on one side when he is drawing the cork : Miss Irving would hardly relish a shower bath, I suppose. Georgina, take care how you help the fish, and remember to be very particular in asking Lady Kingsbury, whether she chuses the thick or the thin part of the salmon ; remember, too, that you 've got on a new dress

which won't be improved by spots of grease; and pray don't forget the tea-cup in the raspberry tart, it must be put upon a plate and sent away, you know."

"I am afraid I shall make but a very indifferent carver," said Georgina.

"Don't allow yourself to think so, or you will. Rely upon it, the best way to succeed in whatever you may undertake is to feel confidence in yourself."

"I heartily wish it were over;" half-groaned Major Berrington.

"You will have your wish in time, Major, and that is more than we can say for all wishes, so now, good bye."

Miss Rocket withdrew; and, about an hour afterwards, a heavily laden travelling carriage and four stopped at the little wicket entrance to Major Berrington's garden.

"Surely, Robert," said Lady Kingsbury, ad-

dressing her footman, "this cannot be the place. The postboys must be mistaken. Pray enquire if they are certain they are right. The Grange, you know, the Grange—ask whether this is the Grange. I am sure——" But the approach of Major Berrington and his daughter, who now come forward to welcome their guests, put the matter beyond doubt.

"Ah, Major Berrington, how are you? This is, indeed, a pleasure; hope we're not late. We slept last night at D——, excellent accommodations; I reckoned on being here two hours ago, but we were detained for horses, the races, you know, interfere so terribly with travelling."

"I hope you are not fatigued, the heat has been great;" observed Major Berrington, assisting her to alight.

"Not in the least, I thank you, not in the least. Georgina, my dear girl, how much you are grown—taller than Janet; I never saw a

creature more improved. Well, really this is charming ; quite a bower of sweets. A most lovely spot indeed, and the views perfectly beautiful. Pray don't trouble yourself, my servant will manage everything," said Lady Kingsbury, as, leaning on the arm of her host, she proceeded up the narrow gravel walk, and finally established herself on the drawing-room sofa. And,—

"What a dreadful hole you live in—insufferably hot weather, tired to death, wish I had not come ; that girl is growing like a milkmaid," at the same time *thought* Lady Kingsbury.

After a few reciprocal civilities, Major Ber-
rington hastily left the drawing-room, in consequence of considerable scuffling and talking outside the door, which, he naturally concluded, arose from the difficulty of getting the luggage up the narrow, inconvenient staircase : and, great was his dismay on beholding the multi-

tude of imperials, bonnet-boxes, dressing-cases, and chaise-seats that almost blocked up the little hall.

“To judge by her luggage,” thought the miserable Major, as he helped to raise one of the Imperials, “she must purpose staying six months at the very least. What will become of me! I shall be ruined—I shall go mad with her eternal talking. I see nothing for it but to bolt, myself, and leave Georgina to get through the business as she can.”

At length, the hall was cleared, the carriage drove away, and Major Berrington returned to the drawing-room, where he found Miss Irving, languidly turning over the leaves of Theresa’s Album, and his daughter, listening to Lady Kingsbury’s account of their journey.

“Well, my dear Major,” said she, turning towards him, “I have been telling Georgy our little travelling disasters and troubles.”

"You met with no accident, I trust?"

"Oh no; nothing but delay—delay, for want of horses. The —— races are going on, and when we came to Marston, which is, you know, within a few miles of the race-course, we found we could not get a horse, for love or money; and were obliged to wait full two hours before we could get on, or we should have been here long ago. Do you usually attend those races?"

"Never; Georgy and I are quiet people, who seldom leave our own fireside."

"I don't very much approve of races, myself, although while my son was a minor, on his account, I made a point of never missing our county races. Now, however, that Marcus is of age, I feel myself at liberty to follow my inclination in this and in some other respects, where formerly I only considered his interests, and, as a first-fruit of my liberty, have preferred a quiet visit here, in preference to joining a

large party at the lodge. My tastes were always quiet."

"How very unfortunate;" thought Major Berrington.

"What exquisite flowers! Those carnations are really superb, you must have a very skilful gardener. Of course you send your flowers to the Horticultural meetings."

"I have not, hitherto."

"Oh, you should, indeed. My gardener gained several prizes: some of our stove-plants were allowed to be unrivalled—our pines too—"

At this instant the door of the room was opened, and Timothy, looking hot and dirty presented himself.

"Please, sir, what is to be done about the carriage? It won't go into the coach-house, no how whatsoever, 'tis so filled up with old trunks and lumber. And, if we was to clear them all away, I 'm mortal feared the rats would gnaw it all to pieces."

Major Berrington started on his feet ; among all his preparations for Lady Kingsbury's reception, accommodation for her carriage had been quite forgotten.

"Pray don't trouble yourself," said Lady Kingsbury : then, addressing Timothy—"Be kind enough to desire the carriage may be driven to the Inn."

Tim nodded, and withdrew ; but re-appeared in a few seconds.

"Please, my Lady, there be two houses in Atherley as has 'commodation for coaches—the Bell Inn, kept by Widow Nilkens, and the Cow and Cabbage, as belongs to Mr. Brown ; which would your Ladyship like?"

"Oh, never mind, my good friend," cried Lady Kingsbury, smiling. "I really cannot undertake to decide upon the merits of the rival houses ; let the postillions settle that matter."

"The Bell Inn is reckoned the most genteel-
erest," replied Timothy.

"Then let it be the Bell. And now, Georgina, may I be shewn my room? I shall really be glad to make some little change in my dress, and rid myself of these unpleasant reminiscences of the turn-pike road," said Lady Kingsbury, shaking a few grains of dust from her rich gros de Naples dress.

With the exception of the explosion of two bottles of ginger-beer, the dinner passed off fairly enough ; the evening was spent in strolling about the garden ; and, at half-past-ten o'clock, Lady Kingsbury, pleading fatigue, retired to her apartment, where she listened, with no little amusement, to various household details imparted by her waiting woman, who affirmed, and probably with truth, that "never before had she been in such a dog-kennel of a place."

Janet, meanwhile, was engaged in giving Georgina a pompous description of the almost innumerable triumphs, the elegant pleasures and refined enjoyments which, since they parted, had been hers ; and Georgina's dark eyes expanded with wonder and delight as she heard of the rejected offers, the invitations that had been declined, the sums of money that had been lavished by her more favoured sister : for Georgina little knew that all this much-vaunted happiness was, in itself, as empty and as false as the description Janet gave.

“ But why did you refuse him, Janet ? ” she asked, as Janet concluded a long list of admirers whom she had doomed to despair, with the very romantic name (to judge from her description) of an equally romantic person. “ If Sir Willoughby is so handsome, and so agreeable, and all that, and so much in love with you, why did you not accept him ? ”

—enough to me, I have no more.
Besides, Sir Willoughby is poor
thousand a year. I really could
a poor man—there is something
poverty.”

“Two thousand a year, Janet!
a man with two thousand a year,]
Mrs. Daymour, of Bolton, has more
Mr. Beechcroft’s income (our clerk
not reach one; Maurice, too, say
could be certain of five hundred
be content. Janet, you cannot be

“I am, perfectly. To me, two
a year appears little better than
others, to be sure, such people
Beechcroft, or Mr. Arnold, might
with less. But I am not a rich man.”

even for health, one must have a sufficient number of servants, and a good sized house. I, positively, could not exist in a cottage; I should die of suffocation were I to inhabit one; small, low rooms are my aversion," replied Janet, drawing a deep breath as she concluded.

"I fear, then," said Georgina timidly, "you will be very uncomfortable here."

"Don't mention it," replied Miss Irving, with a patronizing air; "we are but birds of passage, and, for a short time, anything is endurable. Besides, were I a hundred times more inconvenienced, I would gladly bear it for the sake of seeing you, my sweet Georgina."

Georgina threw her arms round Janet's neck. "I wish," she said, "we could make the Grange better worthy of you; it is, I know, a sad old place, and papa and I quite unused to visiters. But tell me, dearest Janet, if there is anything we can do to make you more com-

fortable ? What does my aunt particularly prefer ? And how will she like to spend her time ? The country round is reckoned very pretty, and we have one or two picturesque old ruins. Lord Lineageleigh's place, too, is well worth seeing. Do you think a pic-nic exploring party would be pleasant ?”

“ A pic-nic exploring party !” exclaimed Janet, with some animation. “ Pic-nics are sometimes very delightful ; but then the company must be well chosen. The last pic-nic I was at, we went a party down the Thames to Richmond. Perceval D'Esterre was with us. Have you ever seen Perceval D'Esterre ?”

“ No,” was, of course, the answer.

“ Oh, no, to be sure not ; how could you have met him. But who are we to have for this exploring expedition ?”

“ Oh,” said Georgina, “ there are the Arnolds and their aunt, Miss Rocket, and Miss Flagge, and the two Mr. Brambers.”

"Who are they?" interrupted Janet.

"The eldest is a lawyer at Marston."

"Enough," rejoined Miss Irving. "We must blackball the Mr. Brambers. I do not affect lawyers, unless they be also sons to men of ten thousand a year; and a country lawyer would annihilate me. So, name some other cavaliers."

"I know no other gentleman: but we should not want them; it is not here as in London; we should be quite safe under Maurice Arnold's escort."

"You spoke of the Arnolds; what are they?"

"Maurice's sisters, my second cousins. Surely, you must remember how they used all to laugh at me, when at Miss Maxwells, for talking so incessantly about them."

"I do remember something of it. Five, are there not, five sisters?"

"Yes, there are five."

"How dreadful! I'm glad I have not five sisters. And are none of them married yet?"

"None; but the third, Belinda, is engaged to Captain Slycer, of the —— Infantry."

"A man of fortune?"

"Oh no, very little."

"What a fool she must be to marry him!"

"Belinda says she is attached to him."

"That does not make her conduct wiser. But I am tired now, good night. We can settle our plans to-morrow. I am really quite knocked up. Only, while I think of it, one word of caution, my dear girl: don't let your father press his hospitalities, too much, on Lady Kingsbury, It's not well bred in the first place, and, in the next, I had no little trouble in persuading our good aunt to come here at all, and if she fancies she is likely to be laid violent hands on, and detained *à force de politesses*, the chances are, she will order the horses, and be off, instanter."

Georgina kissed her sister, and withdrew. For a few minutes Janet remained meditating on their different positions; and a bright smile of triumph kindled her eye, and played around her lip, as she drew a comparison, all the advantages of which rested so eminently on her side. But an envious disposition always finds something on which to fasten, and Janet was not long in recollecting that, while the rays of fond, parental love shed their soft influence upon Georgina's lot, the sentiments Lady Kingsbury had imbibed *for her* were but *habitual*—any person to whose presence she had been accustomed for the same number of years would have been equally interesting. Even her home, Miss Irving knew to be precarious. Lady Kingsbury had nieces of her own, who would gladly have taken Janet's place; and it was by no means improbable that the time might come when, swayed by caprice, Lady

Kingsbury would withdraw her patronage from Janet, and bestow it on her immediate relatives. That Lady Kingsbury did sometimes contemplate such a change was evident, both from the expressions she would occasionally let fall, and from her increasing anxiety to see her present charge established in another home.

“Janet,” she would say, “you play your cards badly; with your advantages, you ought to have married long ago. Indeed, my dear girl, you must begin to look about you: this is your third season and no prospect whatever of your being settled. Lady Mary Brice and I were speaking of it the other night; and she thinks, with me, that you are too fastidious—aim at too high a mark. There cannot be a greater error; a common one, I grant you; all girls are apt to over-rate their pretensions; but it is a very great mistake. For men of large fortune, and Peers’ eldest sons, never marry girls without

money: they can't afford it. Nothing but professional men, or younger brothers think of young women with such fortunes as yours. Therefore, pray take my advice, and be less exclusive; exclusiveness is admirable policy for a man, but it is injurious to a woman, very injurious; unless, indeed, her claims be of the very highest order. I'm really beginning to feel anxious to see you well settled. When you are married I shall have Eliza Fitzgrove to live with me; a very sweet girl is Eliza Fitzgrove, the image of my dear, deceased sister. Lord William Knyvett admires her exceedingly; and, with a little good management, I have no doubt it would be a match. Both Eliza's sisters have made excellent matches, although they have not so much money as you, Janet; and nothing like the introduction I have been able to give you. It certainly is very strange you do not marry."

Janet was of the same opinion; nor, in reality, the list of suitors that had so surprised Georgina was of her own creation. It is true, her aunt's dinner parties and Opera tickets, joined to her personal attractions, had drawn around her many admirers; but, with one or two insignificant exceptions, none were serious in their intentions; they danced, talked, flirted, but would go no further; they were quite willing to amuse themselves, but not to marry; they accepted Lady Kingsbury's invitations, but declined her niece. Janet's high-flown expectations were falling to the ground.

Her peace of mind, however, remained uninjured during her first two seasons; but she was not to pass, unscathed, a third ordeal. In the spring of the present year, a Mr. D'Esterre was added to the number of admirers, and so marked were his attentions, so apparently devoted was his manner, that Janet became

deeply interested, or rather, perhaps, attached. Most other girls would probably have done the same; for Perceval was handsome, intelligent, and fashionable — his fortune reported ample, his connexions good—and his character unimpeachable. He was, besides, his own master; and, quite an exception to the generality of men of six-and-twenty, actually professed a wish to marry.

Under all these considerations, Miss Irving saw no necessity for repressing her new-born sentiments. Hitherto, her ready vanity had traced her admirers' backwardness to want of fortune, friends' interference, disinclination to be manacled for life—and so on. But nothing of the kind existed here; and, as Mr. D'Esterre was evidently much enamoured, she suffered herself to entertain, not the hope, but the certainty, that the close of the season would find her on her way into ——shire, in a chariot

and four, with the individual whose society she coveted above all others by her side.

That Janet took no such journey, our readers are well aware ; nor need they be informed that, as, unhappily, is frequently the case, when young ladies plan such expeditions, the gentleman's caprice, or fickleness it was, which caused the downfall of these pleasant expectations. After nearly two months' assiduous attention — after dancing with her — walking with her — riding by the carriage window — sitting for hours at the house — in short, doing everything that usually precedes an offer, Perceval suddenly left town, without even attempting an explanation.

Some girls would have been ready to break their hearts ; Janet did nothing of the kind. She was disappointed, but not desponding ; she believed the completion of her wishes postponed, not altogether lost : and, far from en-

deavouring to forget the recreant knight, she relieved the irksomeness of her stay at Atherley by indulging in an almost perpetual reverie, in which Perceval, with his soft hazle eyes, his chesnut hair, slight figure, and graceful mien, was ever present to her mind.

CHAPTER VII.

NOTWITHSTANDING the inconvenience to which she subjected Major Berrington, Lady Kingsbury never, for a moment, thought of shortening her stay at Atherley. Indeed, on such occasions, people are far more apt to consult their own, than their host's, convenience: on which account it is highly impolitic to give an unlimited invitation; if you wish your friends to stay a month, ask them for a fortnight; and you may congratulate yourself if,

at the end of the fourth week, your house is clear.

Altogether, however, the visit was not so tedious as might have been expected. Time flies fast where there is little variety to mark his progress ; and, as Lady Kingsbury made herself quite at home, Major Berrington speedily forgot to look upon her as a guest, and, relapsing into his old habits, spent the greater portion of his time amid his dearly cherished flowers. Janet amused herself as above stated ; Lady Kingsbury wrote letters, or worked tapestry ; while Georgina wandered from one to another, offering her services as she thought they might be wanted.

But, although she had not scrupled making a convenience of the Major's house, Lady Kingsbury was not blind to the trouble she had given ; nor altogether without inclination

to repay it. She belonged, in fact, to that numerous class of persons who are willing enough to be kind and good-natured, provided they can be so without incurring trouble or expense; and, in accordance with this characteristic, she thus addressed Miss Irving, a few days before that on which their visit was to terminate.

"Janet, do you think Major Berrington would part with Georgina for a few weeks? I've a great mind to ask her to go with us to Eastbeach; but she really seems so necessary to her father, I hardly like to propose it."

"Indeed, my dear aunt, it would almost amount to cruelty. How could Major Berrington exist without my sister?"

"It would, however, be a great advantage to Georgina, were she to see a little of the world; and, for her sake, perhaps, he would

make the sacrifice. At any rate, I can but ask; whether he consents or not, the compliment will be the same, and I shall be saved the necessity of making a handsome present in return for his civility; which, to say the truth I should feel rather inconvenient just now; nor do I quite see what I could give—trinkets would be of no use to a girl who never sees a creature.”

“A pretty dress might be useful, and might, perhaps, be met with cheap. Indeed, I am sure nothing would be more acceptable, Georgina’s wardrobe is so scantily supplied.”

“True,” replied Lady Kingsbury; catching however, only at the last idea. “Georgina’s dress would bear improvement. But, of course, if she comes with me, I shall see that she has proper clothes to wear; and really, if she were differently dressed, Georgina would be an exceedingly fine girl.”

“ Oh, yes,” cried Janet, with affected eagerness, “ my sister is, at times, perfectly beautiful. Don’t you remember how much Marcus used to admire her ?”

Lady Kingsbury paused in her benevolent intentions to consider whether her son were likely to persevere in his admiration of his cousin, and how far that admiration might lead him ; while Janet, thinking she had struck the right chord, continued sounding her sister’s praise.

“ You are enthusiastic, Janet,” said Lady Kingsbury, at length : “ you exaggerate her beauty. But I am glad to see you feel thus : it is right sisters should love each other, and you have been too much separated. But, in future, we will manage otherwise. If Georgina marries (and I really should not be surprised at her marrying extremely well, provided she were in

the way of it), you will, of course, live principally with her; and, perhaps, have better luck under her chaperonage than under mine."

Janet became pale with indignation at the notion; but the well-practised hypocrite suppressed her feelings.

"I fear, my dear aunt, that what your kindness has failed to effect I may hardly expect through any other channel. But do you indeed think it would be possible to entice Georgina away from home? It would make me so happy to have her society; and she, dear girl, would so enjoy the change. How very, very kind you are. I only fear Major Berrington will never consent to part with her."

"I will try what I can do, at any rate," replied Lady Kingsbury, who, reflecting that her son's engagements would detain him in shire until after Christmas, no longer saw

the slightest risk in withdrawing Georgina from her obscurity.

Her proposal met with no opposition. Anxious, on Georgina's account, to cultivate the good-will of her mother's family, Major Berrington readily consented to part with her for a few weeks ; and she, secure that, while she was away, Charlotte, Maurice, and their other kind-hearted neighbours would be unremitting in attention to her father, looked forward to the excursion with all the delight and eagerness of that period of our existence when life's enchanted cup is sparkling still—when hope is vivid as reality—and joy a mountain rivulet that gushes merrily along, nor deems how much the goal it seeks shall sully its bright waters.

Very different were Janet's feelings upon this occasion : she saw her sister take her place

in Lady Kingsbury's carriage with a degree of dissatisfaction even she could scarcely master or conceal ; for Miss Irving could not disguise from herself that Georgina's beauty would constitute her a most dangerous rival in one respect, and her obliging disposition in another. She might, at once, outshine Janet in the ball-room, and supplant her in the good graces of their mutual relative ; for more than once had Lady Kingsbury lauded Georgina's talent and dexterity in the performance of all those little offices for which the old must be indebted to the young ; and which, when tendered with ready willingness, prove so attaching.

As Lady Kingsbury had not previously engaged a house, on reaching Eastbeach they drove immediately to the principal hotel.

"Fine eyes, by Jove!" said a vulgar-looking man, who passed them as they entered.

Lady Kingsbury looked offended, and drew Georgina's arm within hers ; while Janet was irritated even by this equivocal compliment.

" Georgina," she said, when they were undressing to go to bed, " I hope you mean speedily to adopt a more consistent style of dress ; the man who spoke so vulgarly about your eyes evidently took you for the lady's maid."

" The lady's maid !"

" Yes, the lady's maid. You do not, surely, suppose he would have ventured to make so impertinent a remark had he imagined you to belong to the upper classes ?"

" Do I look like a servant ?" enquired Georgina, with some mortification.

" Not when properly dressed ; but, really, in that calico gown—"

" I will never wear it again. And yet, when

Lady Wrighton and her daughters called the other day, they had on dresses very like to mine, and you admired Miss Wrighton's appearance."

"Very likely. Some people have, naturally, so distingué an air that they can wear anything; but that is not your case."

"I suppose not," replied Georgina, "since I am mistaken for a lady's maid."

"That dress—"

"Is odious; and I, certainly, will never appear in it again. But silk is very expensive, and spots so terribly; and I have but one."

"You can purchase others, I suppose. Major Berrington told you to get whatever would be necessary."

"Yes; papa gave me five pounds to pay all my personal expenses, letters, &c. Do you think, Janet, I may venture on another silk

dress? I should so like a Levantine, like yours. Do you think I might venture to buy one?"

"I really cannot tell; but we will enquire the price of silks tomorrow, and, if you find you cannot manage it, I suppose I must see how far I can assist you."

"Dearest Janet, how kind, how very kind you are!"

"My funds are low, just now, I fear; but on your account I would gladly make a sacrifice, for I am anxious about your appearance, my dear girl; and really dress makes so much difference."

"It does, indeed."

"And you are just the person who should be very particular as to what you wear."

"I certainly am a very dowdy-looking creature," thought Georgina, glancing at herself in

the glass. "I hope nobody will ever look at me again."

Janet saw by her countenance how vexed Georgina felt, and she was satisfied. She had gained her point: by lowering her sister's opinion of herself, she increased the timidity, which was, in truth, the greatest drawback she possessed.

From time immemorial it has been the custom for heroines to rise early, walk before breakfast, and meet with adventures. Georgina did the first, but her walk extended only to the sitting room, and her adventures were none. For some time she amused herself with looking from the bay window, which fronted the sea and overlooked the fashionable promenade. And she saw machines going in and out of the water—ladies in poke bonnets, followed by maid-servants carrying bundles—gentlemen loungers

sitting on the benches—donkeys, and children. Then she became excessively hungry, and rather sentimental; and finally, opened her work-box and began hemming muslin frills. Lady Kingsbury and breakfast were most welcome: and not less was her ladyship's resolution of setting forth in quest of houses, on the conclusion of the meal.

Lady Kingsbury was not easily suited: she required a good house, a good situation, and a low rent; and they knocked at doors, went up and down staircases, and in and out of rooms, until Georgina marvelled that a person thus fastidious found it possible to remain for so long a period beneath her father's most uncomfortable roof. At length, Lady Kingsbury, having explored every tolerable looking residence that was at that time vacant, decided upon taking one, in what was called the South Parade, and

which happened by the way, to be the very first she had looked at. There, they dined off fried soles, and mutton chops; and there, Georgina spent a most delightful evening, reading one of the light productions of the day; no matter which —— it was a most amusing work, and all, who have written such a one, may believe it theirs.

The next day she was happier still: her wardrobe underwent a revision, and was much improved by some additions made by Lady Kingsbury, partly from good nature, and partly from regard to her own respectability. Janet also, having selected a slight silk of the colour most unbecoming to Georgina's complexion, presented it with many expressions of interest to her sister, by whom the paltry present was received with grateful affection.

Henceforth, their time was spent after the

profitable manner time is usually spent by the sea-side : a mode of life I need surely not describe ; since the majority of those who deem these pages worthy a perusal are doubtless well acquainted with the goings on of watering-place frequenters. How acquaintances meet on the beach or esplanade, smile, tell each other that the day is fine, and then pass on—how riding, driving, walking parties are projected, and people go in shoals, and inconvenient carriages, to see sights, and visit places, and admire scenery, for which, nearer their own homes, they would not have gone five steps out of their way—how there are balls at the assembly rooms, which the aristocratic portion of the company do not patronise, and the less fastidious do—how the gentlemen lounge at the libraries or billiard rooms, criticise the appearance of the belles, and speculate upon their fortunes—how

the young ladies walk, and the elder ones gossip—how all are idle, all restless, many dissatisfied.

Georgina, however, was not amongst the last; the novelty and animation of the whole gave it a zest to one entirely unhacknied in such scenes; and could she sometimes have persuaded Janet to exchange the more frequented walks for a ramble, or, rather, I should say, a scramble on the rocks, she would have pronounced Eastbeach a most enchanting spot.

Both sisters met with much admiration; and, for a while, opinion balanced between them; but eventually the palm was given to the youngest. For, while Miss Irving was allowed to be the best dressed girl in Eastbeach, Georgina was the handsomest; and it is quite astonishing what short turns people were in the habit of taking when she was on the esplanade;

and how nearly were the rules of politeness infringed, as the gentlemen endeavoured to penetrate the recesses of a somewhat close bonnet, that they might catch a glimpse of her dark speaking eyes and sunny smile. The object of their admiration was far from being gratified, for, totally devoid of vanity, she traced the notice she attracted to any motive but the right one; and Janet, well aware how much self-confidence would increase her sister's loveliness, took good care she should not be better informed.

But it was gall and wormwood to her envious mind.

"Georgina," she said, one afternoon, "this being so constantly in public is really very tiresome: do let us try and find out some quieter place, where we can walk without being stared out of countenance."

"Shall we try the sands?" enquired Georgina. "The tide is out, and, once round that point, we shall be quite alone. Nobody ever walks there. Do come, Janet."

Janet agreed; they set off in the proposed direction, while Lady Kingsbury, afraid of wetting her feet, preferred seating herself by a London acquaintance.

"How delightful this is!" said Georgina, enchanted to escape the thralldom of the public walk. "So superior to the Esplanade. Janet, let us always walk here."

"Yes," replied Janet, languidly, "it is very agreeable."

"So quiet, too; not a creature near; now we have turned the point we might almost fancy ourselves in an uninhabited island."

"I am sure that would be little to my taste,"

replied Janet, with a slight laugh. "I like man kind better than solitude."

"Look at the sea, how beautifully calm it is. Oh! this is indeed a very lovely spot."

"Do you never think of your father, Georgina? He must miss you sadly," observed Janet, after a short pause.

"Yes, I often think of papa, and wish for him; were he but here I think I should be too happy."

"Is Major Berrington the only person you would like to transport hither from Atherley?"

"There are many persons at home I love."

"And *one par excellence*."

"Certainly, Charlotte Arnold is my favourite cousin."

"What is her brother?"

"He does not live at Atherley."

"He is there a great deal, at any rate," said

Janet, archly. And I should think Mr. Arnold's presence not altogether unwelcome to a certain fair lady of my acquaintance."

"Do you mean me?"

"Yes; you are the culprit. Is not Mr. Arnold as great a favourite as his sister?"

"Yes, yes; I love Maurice, dearly," replied Georgina, with far more frankness than her sister wished. "And so would you, Janet, if you knew him as well as I do."

At this moment, two gentlemen on horseback suddenly emerged from behind the projecting cliffs, and Georgina felt Miss Irving grasp her arm. Both gentlemen bowed, and, in returning the salutation, Janet's complexion deepened, and her whole countenance became radiant with surprise and pleasure.

"Who is that?" inquired Georgina.

"Colonel Stafford."

"Yes, yes, I know ; but who is the other ?"

"A gentleman I knew in London, Mr. D'Esterre," Janet answered, still blushing. "But don't look round, Georgina ; we shall have them joining us. Pray don't look back ; it is so very vulgar."

"I did not," replied Georgina.

"Pardon me."

"I was not aware of it ; I did not know I turned my head."

"You never know anything. It is quite surprising, Georgina, how ignorant of good breeding you shew yourself to be ; I am constantly quite in trepidation for you—for I see that people are always wondering what you are, and where you came from."

"I, certainly, have not had your advantages," replied Georgina ; who, however, had been guilty of no such solecism in good manners as Janet chose to assert.

"If you had, it would have made no difference. You want tact, observation. All the society in the world would not have made you anything but what you are.' Now, don't loiter so—never mind that sea-weed—you may find twenty such bunches; and if we stand dawdling in this way, those men will think we want them to join us."

They continued walking for about ten minutes longer, when Janet suddenly became very nervous, and timid.

"There is one point," she said, "in which you are greatly my superior, and that is, in courage. Do you know, I am the greatest coward in existence: and now, that it is getting late, I do not feel comfortable at being in so lonely a place. I don't think it can be safe. See, what an ill-looking man that is—indeed, Georgy, I cannot stay here—you must humour me, by returning to the haunts of men."

Georgina readily acquiesced ; and, with erect mien and buoyant footstep, Janet retraced her way. For the hope that Perceval had come to Eastbeach in pursuit of her was fluttering at her heart—her ill-natured strictures, too, had encreased Georgina's colour to a most unbecoming shade : for once, therefore, at any rate, her sister would prove not a rival—but a foil.

They reached the Esplanade ; but, as “ the haunts of men ” held not the individual most interesting to Miss Irving, after taking two or three turns, she declared herself fatigued, and proposed, as Lady Kingsbury had returned home, that they should follow her. Georgina went straight up to her bed-room, while Janet entered the drawing-room where Lady Kingsbury was sitting, and, after some little circumlocution, expressed a desire to join a party who

were going to the rooms that evening. Lady Kingsbury replied by reminding her that, when the idea was first suggested, she had declared herself against it in a most decided manner.

"True," rejoined Miss Irving; "for, you know, I dislike all this sort of thing exceedingly, I consider watering-place gaieties in the very worst taste. But the Stopfords are all anxiety that we should go; indeed, they have said so much about it, I hardly see how we can remain at home without its being supposed we wish to give ourselves airs. So that, for once, perhaps, it might not be amiss to go, just for an hour or so; you know, if we do but show ourselves it will be enough. I understand, also, it is expected to be a good ball; Sir Charles Treadway's family, and almost all the people from the neighbourhood, are coming."

"Oh," replied Lady Kingsbury, "I've not

Georgina, who has so few opportunities
seeing any thing of the sort."

"Georgina? Do you think of taking her?"

"To be sure I do, why should Georgina not
have the benefit of any little amusement that
is passing?"

"My dear aunt, I question whether she
would consider it amusement."

"Then she must be very unlike other girls
of her age."

"Her excessive shyness, and the quiet life
she has hitherto led, render my sister averse
to anything like society; besides, I am very much
afraid she has no dress, excepting that white
muslin she wore last week, when we were
drinking tea with Lady Ditchley."

think it would be a pity. How is she ever to get over that shyness, if she shuts herself up? As for her dress—at seventeen, we do not expect a very elaborate toilet; her muslin will do extremely well: and while we are at dinner, Turner shall see whether she cannot find some white roses. I should think Miss Paxton must have some. White roses will suit Georgina's dark hair. I've no doubt she will look very pretty in white roses."

"Oh, yes, I'm certain of it—and, I can lend her some of my pearl ornaments. They will be very becoming—and now, I will go and try to induce her to come," said Janet, leaving the room, with the full intention of persuading Georgina to remain behind.

"Georgy, you cannot think how much I envy you;" exclaimed Miss Irving, and, for once, perhaps, speaking the truth.

"Envy me, Janet! What is there about me to envy?"

"A great deal; for you are at liberty to consult your own inclination, and may remain cosily at home to-night—while I accompany my aunt to this abominable ball."

"What ball?"

"The ball at the rooms. You know, I always hate such things—crowded, vulgar, and disagreeable. But that matters little; go I must."

"I did not know that any one was going."

"Nor I, until this minute: but it seems my aunt has been talked into it; and I cannot of course refuse, however disagreeable I find the notion. But say nothing about it, Georgy, I would not for the world she suspected how annoyed I am."

"And Lady Kingsbury does not wish me to go?" inquired Georgina, who felt something

very like an inclination to mingle in a scene, whose charms Janet had often glowingly described.

“My aunt wishes you to do exactly as you feel disposed ; which I conclude will be to stay quietly at home, and amuse yourself with the book you are so much interested in—I am sure there will be nothing half so entertaining at the ball. I really envy you your power of choice.”

“You think I should not like a ball?”

“You know your own taste best ; for my part, I should not, for an instant, hesitate between quiet, with an amusing book, and the ennui of a ball-room.”

“Perhaps, it would not be tiresome.”

“Perhaps not ; but the chances are that you would find it so. In all probability, Lady Kingsbury will seat herself at the card-table ; I shall, of course, do all I can to prevent your feeling dull and awkward ; but I may be obliged

to dance a great deal; and, having so few acquaintances, you will perhaps find yourself very uncomfortably situated. Just fancy yourself seated at the back of my aunt's chair, your whole entertainment being to watch the game, count the honours, or speculate on the odd trick; while all the girls, who cannot get partners, criticise your appearance, and the men, who happen not to choose to dance, stand staring at you."

"It would be dreadful, indeed. But, perhaps somebody would ask me to dance? Do you think I have no chance, whatever, of a partner?"

"Very little—a girl who goes into a ball-room knowing no one seldom finds herself in much request. I shall never forget my first ball; if my aunt had not been very peremptory on the subject, I believe I should never have ventured to a second: indeed, the whole of my first season was anything but pleasant. Still,

you know it is a lottery, and if you feel inclined to make the trial, I will do all I can to get you partners."

"Thank you, dear Janet, I know you would : but indeed, I think I had better stay at home."

This determination was, however, overruled : Lady Kingsbury, finding that timidity alone influenced Georgina, felt it an act of duty to interfere ; and, at rather a late hour, no little stir pervaded the ball-room in consequence of the unexpected appearance of that lady and her protégées.

They were decidedly the most interesting girls in the room. Miss Irving, dressed in the very perfection of good taste ; her colour, heightened, and her eyes glistening with the delightful hope of meeting Perceval D'Esterre, was indeed a very lovely object—while Georgina, rather more pale than ordinary, owing to the trepidation she could not conquer, a few

white flowers wreathed amidst her jetty tresses, her graceful form veiled rather than concealed, by the soft folds of her light, simple dress, looked like some dark-eyed daughter of a Southern clime. They were totally unlike, yet each was beautiful.

The result of that evening's entertainment was as opposite as the personal appearance of these two fair beings. On entering the ball-room, Janet's well-practised glance soon ascertained that Perceval D'Esterre was not amongst the crowd; and, forthwith, she wished herself at home again. Two quadrilles only would she condescend to dance, and those with the two first men in the room. Georgina, on the other hand, gladly, even gratefully, accepted every partner; and, as a crowded room is far less formidable than an empty one, she speedily forgot that any one was likely to observe her, and enjoyed herself exceedingly.

"Oh, I 've spent such a delightful evening!" she exclaimed, as they were driving home. "I shall never be afraid of going to a ball again."

"I am glad of it, my dear," replied Lady Kingsbury, "I am very glad to hear it. I always like to see young people happy, and enjoying themselves. How many quadrilles did you dance?"

"Seven," answered Georgina, after a minute's consideration.

"And you, Janet?"

"I danced twice — once with Sir Henry Studeley, and once with Mr. Oswald, Lord Hilpington's son."

"What were your partners' names, Georgina?" asked Lady Kingsbury.

"I 'm sure, I don't know; at least, I only remember what two of them were called. I hardly even heard the names of the others; or, if I did, I have forgotten them."

“And who were those two?”

“Major Philpot, and Mr. White.”

“And which of the gentlemen you danced with did you like best?”

“Indeed, my dear Aunt, I saw no difference ; they seemed to me all alike.”

“Was not one more agreeable than the other?”

“No, indeed.”

“What did you talk about?”

“Talk about, dear aunt ! nothing. There was no time for conversation—and that is one reason why I like balls better than any other amusement ; you have nothing to do but to dance, and change partners.”

“Ah, Georgina, but you must do something more than that, in future, or your partners will never ask you a second time.”

“Oh, yes, I know ; I must bow to all these gentlemen ; the lady bows first, or it is sup-

posed she wishes to drop the acquaintance. I mean to be very attentive, and bow to every gentleman who is kind enough to be my partner."

"Yes, my dear girl: but, unless you follow up your bow with something entertaining, you may bow in vain. I mean that you must prove yourself capable of amusing—you must converse; it is not enough that a woman is attractive—she should, also, be agreeable; she must be liked, as well as admired. In these days, men are not satisfied with a mere well-dressed doll, or pretty-looking picture."

"I should never know what to say."

"Subjects for conversation will arise; or, if they do not, you must make them."

"Make subjects for conversation? Oh, my dear aunt, that would be impossible!"

"Not at all; you have excellent abilities, and, with a little exertion, would find yourself

quite as equal to converse as any other girl. So, remember my advice, and let me see you talk, as well as dance, to-morrow evening."

Those of my readers who happen to be troubled with *mauvaise honte* will be prepared to hear that Lady Kingsbury's injunctions produced an effect the opposite of her intention. Indeed, the very notion she was expected to converse, the consciousness of being watched, paralysed Georgina's faculties, and sealed her lips. She became, if possible, more silent than before ; and the consequence appeared fully to justify her aunt's predictions. For, though Miss Berrington was still universally allowed to be the belle of Eastbeach—though almost every stranger sought an introduction—though all admired, none shewed a wish for further intimacy—her shyness seemed contagious. Lady Kingsbury, highly annoyed, repeated her exhortations, but without inducing any change.

Georgina's timidity remained invincible, and her aunt, greatly mortified, gave up the case as hopeless; and began to look upon her as a wilful girl, who would not profit by advice.

Lady Kingsbury's vexation was not, altogether, of Georgina's making. To Janet's mind, already soured by disappointment, Georgina's successful *début* was peculiarly distasteful; and, listening only to the malevolent suggestions of her envious heart, she resolved to tarnish, as she could not utterly destroy, the lustre of her sister's triumph. It was not long ere an occasion presented itself.

"Miss Berrington is a splendid creature," observed Colonel Stafford, "a very fine girl, indeed; and I venture to predict for her a first-rate marriage."

"Not if I can help it," thought Janet, to whom the remark had been addressed, and who listened with an air of apparent satisfaction.

"Yes," continued the Colonel, following Georgina with his eyes, "she is exceedingly handsome—has made some havoc here already; Oswald is half in love with her; and, though that won't do, for, you know, he wants money, can't marry under sixty thousand pounds, at least, he 'll not be the only one, take my word for it. A little more animation, and a slight degree of fashion, which she will gain from one season in town, and your sister will find herself the theme of universal praise."

"Perhaps, she has no such wish."

"Pardon me, but I do not think there exists a woman who does not care for admiration—flattery is the very food you live upon."

"You forget Lady Mary S—, who withstood so hot an attack last spring."

Colonel Stafford laughed good-humouredly, although he had been among the disappointed aspirants for Lady Mary's hand.

"There was," he said, "a reason good in Lady Mary's case; the enemy was in the citadel; she had already capitulated."

"Perhaps, Georgina is similarly situated."

"Ha! Is Miss Berrington engaged?"

"No, not positively engaged; it is only—but what am I doing? I ought not to have mentioned this at all—pray forget my imprudence, and let my foolish communication go no farther."

"Tell me the name of the favoured man, and you shall find me all discretion."

"No, no, I cannot—indeed I cannot," replied Janet, in an earnest tone. "It is a very foolish piece of business—quite against the wishes of her family, and I really hope will never come to anything. So promise me you will not repeat it. Above all, don't give me as your authority, and avoid making any allusion, on the subject, to my sister; you will distress her, beyond measure, if you do."

Colonel Stafford promised silence ; and so far kept his word that he merely advised his friend Oswald to take care how he fell in love with an engaged woman. And Oswald, who declared he never gave Miss Berrington a second thought, talked about her and her engagement until it was pretty generally known in East-beach.

Thus Janet's manœuvre succeeded beyond her expectation. People do not run into danger with their eyes open ; not one, therefore, of Georgina's most determined admirers endeavoured to cultivate an acquaintance with a very lovely girl, no longer mistress of her hand and heart. And, as the persons most interested in similar reports are generally the very last to hear them, it was some time before even a surmise of this rumour reached Lady Kingsbury. She, of course, gave it an unqualified, and most decided denial ; but it was too late—the mis-

chief was already done—Georgina continued to be shunned as an engaged woman; and her reserved manner and apparent indifference to admiration were attributed to pre-occupied affection.

CHAPTER VIII.

THERE are seasons when wind and tide are in our favour, and we sail blithely on—when every thing we turn our hand to prospers—when it would almost seem impossible to *wish*—for all our hearts' desires appear already given. Such was now Janet's lot. She had contrived to throw Georgina into the back-ground; she had weakened the interest Lady Kingsbury had shewn herself disposed to take in her; and, to crown all, Perceval D'Esterre, after a little

hesitation and backwardness, became more assiduous in his attentions than even formerly.

The greatest portion of his mornings was spent loitering in Lady Kingsbury's drawing-room; in the long rambles the sisters took together (now always in the most private direction), he was Miss Irving's shadow; he made, not unfrequently, a fourth at their dinner table; and, during the evening, whilst Georgina read, and Lady Kingsbury worked or wrote, Janet would seat herself at the piano, and Perceval hang over her, apparently, without a thought or wish beyond the pleasure of the present moment.

Never, on these occasions, were Georgina's musical powers called into requisition; for, although in point of science, all the advantage lay on Janet's side, it was not so with regard to natural endowment. Miss Irving's voice was weak, sometimes even thin and wiry;

feriority, and was careful to avoid competition with so dangerous a rival. Whenever, therefore, Lady Kingsbury hinted that Geo *could* sing, or proposed a duett, Miss I would second Georgina's entreaties to es with so much dexterity and earnestness never failed to avert an exhibition, equally dreaded by both sisters, though from widely different motives.

It chanced, however, one afternoon, Lady Kingsbury was from home, and above stairs, that Georgina, finding herself occupant of the drawing-room, opened piano, and began singing some of her favorite ballads. The music, naturally carried her mind to Atherley; and her voice be

home feelings and remembrances gathered around her heart. She had been thus occupied some twenty or thirty minutes, when a slight rustling caught her attention, and, quickly turning, to her no little annoyance, she beheld Mr. D'Esterre, who had omitted to close the door of the apartment he had entered, unperceived. Thus, whilst believing herself quite alone, Georgina had been overheard by the person in the world she imagined most inclined to criticise and depreciate her performance. For, as Mr. D'Esterre seldom vouchsafed to address her even in the most cursory manner, she entertained a notion that she was an object of dislike to him.

“Pray don't close the book, Miss Berrington; if you do, I shall consider it a rebuke for my impertinence in entering your presence without taking the usual step of a formal announcement—a liberty, I should not, per-

Kingsbury's groom of the cl
time I required his services, w
determining the name and
vessel that to withdraw him f
ence with the old fisherman,
he had borrowed, would have
cruel. Indeed, I believe, he
against such an unwelcome der
vices, for I found the house do
invitingly open."

"My aunt is not at home," sa

"I am aware of it: Lady K
Willis's Library, where she beg
and you will join her; to conv
sage, and escort you to the s
deputed agent."

In the course of a very short time, Janet, fully equipped for walking, made her appearance.

"How is it," enquired Perceval, after repeating Lady Kingsbury's message, "how is it that I have never heard Miss Berrington sing until this morning, and then, only, as it were, by stealth?"

"Georgina is so shy and uncertain that she never sings before strangers. I mean that, for want of having been properly taught, and perhaps, from a slight natural deficiency of ear, she has no control over her voice; and will one day delight, almost electrify you with its power and extent; whilst on the next, or perhaps even sooner, she will produce an effect nearly as astonishing the other way. And as I know *mauvaise honte* always places her in this disadvantageous position, I never urge her to sing or play, when there

appears the slightest danger of its occurring : that is to say, whenever strangers are present."

"It is a thousand pities so exquisite a talent should be thus buried !"

"It is indeed ; I have done all I can to counteract the groundless feelings which prove so great a drawback ; but they are, I fear, constitutional and therefore invincible."

"Still, as I have once enjoyed the gratification of hearing Miss Berrington sing, I trust she will not in future consider me as a stranger."

Here Georgina joined them, and they proceeded together to the library, where they found Lady Kingsbury, who had gained a prize in the last night's raffle, wavering between the articles from which she was entitled to select.

"What shall I take ?" inquired she.

"That ink-stand," said Janet.

"Those views in Italy," advised Perceval.

"Those screens," urged Georgina.

The leading feature of each individual cha-

acter might be distinctly traced in these respective suggestions. Janet loved glitter—Mr. D'Esterre prided himself on possessing a refined and cultivated taste—while Georgina remembered how much on the preceding evening Lady Kingsbury, who was liable to flushings, had complained of the want of a fire-screen.

After a little deliberation (women can do nothing without deliberation) Mr. D'Esterre's advice was followed; they left the library and set out for a country ramble; Lady Kingsbury leant on Georgina's arm, while the other two, who walked separately, very soon contrived to fall behind, and so continued during the whole way, in spite of various looks and manœuvres on the part of Lady Kingsbury, to bring them into a less lover-like position — poor Lady Kingsbury had certainly two very impracticable nieces to deal with—one would not talk, and the other would not walk, according to her wishes.

That evening, Mrs. King Lewis, a lady long resident at Eastbeach, gave a ball. She was considered the great lady of the place—was on visiting terms with most of the neighbouring families—and, in consequence of being first cousin to the Duke of Cirencester, thought herself entitled to be fine and exclusive. At Eastbeach it was considered a great thing to be acquainted with Mrs. King Lewis—a greater still, to be invited to her balls and soirées. Lady Kingsbury and her nieces enjoyed both privileges, and, as Janet was to be amongst the guests, Mr. D'Esterre condescended to accept an invitation.

To those who stand aloof from scenes of dissipation, how puerile appear the motives that actuate her votaries—how false their estimate of things and individuals! Because Mrs. King Lewis was cousin to the Duke of Cirencester, did it follow, she was amiable and sensible, or

her society worth seeking? No—she was a silly, insipid, vain and frivolous woman. In fact—people who ground their superiority solely on the advantages of wealth or station, rarely acknowledge the necessity of enforcing their assumption by other, and more worthy claims—they seek neither to be good nor intellectual—it is enough that they are great and rich: and a most uninteresting class of beings do they prove; at any rate, in my opinion. I value worth—I venerate religion—I admire talent—and refinement both of mind and manners I can fully estimate—but rank and wealth, simply for their own sakes, are to me, nothing.

As, however, Eastbeach contained few moralizing lookers-on, Mrs. King Lewis was pronounced a very charming person, at least, by all she condescended to patronize; and, as the ball in question was expected to be even beyond her usual entertainments, great had been the

anxiety to obtain tickets—numberless the new dresses ordered for the occasion. And now the lights, so visible in many an up-stair window, proclaim the anxious toilets that are carrying on.

“Janet, do you think any one will dance with me, to-night?” said Georgina, as she sat before the glass arranging her hair, “I almost hope Mr. Oswald will.”

“Mr. Oswald?”

“Yes. I thought he looked pleased when he heard we were going. And, you know, he danced twice with me the other evening.”

“Yes ; because I happened to want a vis-a-vis, and he saw you were disengaged. But, my dear Georgina, you surely do not expect, because a gentleman, to suit his own convenience happens to notice you once, that the same thing will occur again. But I see how it is ; you are falling into the mistake, so common to-

country Misses, of fancying you have made a conquest of every man who pays you the most trifling civility."

"Oh, Janet——"

"It is a very common error; but you will soon be wiser. Stay, let me fasten that rosebud; you are putting it too low down."

Georgina gave the flower into her sister's hand, who placed it in the most unbecoming manner, while she thus continued: "Now I think of it, if Mr. D'Esterre should ask you to dance this evening, pray remember my aunt's advice and talk a little. You have no idea, Georgy, how prejudicial this invincible silence is to you. Mr. D'Esterre would hardly believe me, to-day, when I assured him you were really a sensible girl; he evidently thinks you deficient in intellect. So, indeed, you must make an effort, for my sake; I feel so anxious that he should think well of you. Besides, after all,

where is the difficulty? You cannot want a subject : music, Italian, literature, the fine arts—each, in its turn, presents a ready theme for conversation. And Perceval is so well informed on every subject, you will find him a delightful companion. But be careful to speak only of what you really understand, for he is rather inclined to be severe. Yes—” she pursued, as if considering the subject, “he is undoubtedly satirical, and I dare say could be ill-natured.”

“I should hardly have thought that ; Mr. D’Esterre may be fastidious, and, to say the truth, I’m dreadfully afraid of him : but he does not look ill-natured.”

“Never judge of people by their looks, Georgina—nor even by their words. The most ill-tempered persons often wear an almost perpetual smile, and, under a bland expression and insinuating manner, ill-nature is frequently concealed. This is constantly the case with men

where our sex is concerned. Indeed, some of them will go yet further, and adopt an appearance of admiring interest, for no other purpose in the world than to lead a woman on, until she makes herself ridiculous."

"How shocking!" said Georgina.

"It is, nevertheless, not uncommon; with women they are rarely sincere; and as a proof—it was only this very afternoon, that after expressing himself so much delighted with your singing, and I dare say making you all sorts of fine speeches, no sooner had you left the room, than Mr. D'Esterre regretted to me you had not been better instructed."

"Mr. D'Esterre did not pay me any compliments;" replied Georgina, a little sharply, "and as it was only by accident he overheard me, I really think he might have spared his ill-natured criticisms. I certainly shall not give him an opportunity of repeating them."

As Janet surmised, Mr. D'Esterre asked Georgina to dance ; and as Janet fully intended, during that dance, her sister was more than usually taciturn. The moment the quadrille concluded, she returned to Lady Kingsbury ; but Perceval would not be shaken off. On the contrary, he remained standing before them ; and as Lady Kingsbury was what is commonly called an agreeable person, that is to say, she could and did talk about everything and everybody, Georgina sat by in silence, feeling rather amused than otherwise, until supper was announced.

Mr. D'Esterre gave an arm to each lady, and, at table, placed himself between them. From this moment all Georgina's entertainment vanished : her aunt, like other chaperons, was endowed with a good appetite, and found some *paté de Perigord* infinitely more attractive than Mr. Perceval D'Esterre, who, naturally enough,

turned and addressed his young and lovely neighbour. Georgina would rather have been left in peace ; but afterwards reflecting it was very foolish to be afraid of any body, and still more of her future brother-in-law, she made a strong effort to shake off her uneasiness. She succeeded : after all, Perceval D'Esterre, whose voice was so melodious, his manner so urbane and smile so courtly, was not a very formidable person. Georgina soon found herself comparatively at her ease, and, by the time they left the table, had become interested in her companion.

After supper, he joined the group of girls who stood clustering round Miss Irving and her sister : and the former, immediately detaching herself from the rest, addressed him, as though confident she was alone the magnet of attraction.

They spoke of different places—Brighton, Cheltenham, Eastbeach, were all in turn dis-

cussed. Of the two first, Janet knew little, the last she abused unsparingly—it was vulgar, public, glaring—in short, everything a place should not be. D’Esterre smiled, and asked Georgina if she agreed in this opinion.

“I?” said Georgina, “oh no ; I am delighted with Eastbeach. But then, I could be happy anywhere : perhaps, because I have been so little away from home. If, like Janet, I had spent three seasons in town, I dare say I should be as fastidious as she is.”

“True,” replied Perceval, “three seasons in London, and we must become *blasés* in all our tastes and feelings. I envy you the freshness and simplicity of yours, Miss Berrington.”

“Are you certain that this readiness to receive pleasure arises wholly from inexperience? Children, you know, praise daisies, and oyster-shells ; savage nations bedeck themselves with tinsel or glass beads—and so it is with us ; the mind

makes its own happiness : whilst over-refinement destroys the enjoyment of one person, another, under precisely similar circumstances, remains perfectly contented, simply, from want of discrimination," observed Miss Irving, not particularly pleased by Perceval's remark on her "three London seasons."

"Well," answered Georgina, "as oyster-shells and daisies are more easily obtained than pearls and camellias, I will not quarrel with my power of being easily amused, although it may appear to you to spring from want of taste."

"If you did, you would depreciate one of the greatest and most enviable blessings—a contented disposition," rejoined Mr. D'Esterre.

"A contented disposition is, of course, greatly to be admired," said Janet sententiously. "I question, however, whether those persons who, let surrounding circumstances be what they may, are always happy—always in good spirits,

do not, in some respects, display a deficiency of feeling."

"Janet, you mistake my meaning; I said, I could be happy any where, not under any circumstances. I could not be happy under any circumstances—far from it—I could not be happy if I saw suffering—if I knew that those I loved were less happy than myself. Their presence, too, would be necessary to my enjoyment: and that," she added, observing something like a cloud on Janet's brow, "is one reason why I am so partial to Eastbeach."

"Miss Berrington," said Perceval, after a brief silence, "they are going to waltz. May I request the favour of your hand?"

"Thank you, I do not waltz."

"Why? Because papa disapproves of waltzing? Or because you will not join in a dance about which there are two opinions?"

"I do not know that papa disapproves of

waltzing—nor have I ever thought much about it myself.”

“Then think now, and let your thoughts favour my request.”

“I cannot, the motion makes me giddy.”

“Oh, that will soon pass off—try a few turns, we will stop the instant you feel tired.”

“No, no, I am confident my head would be turned with the very first bar.”

“It would be something to turn that head,” murmured Perceval, in so low a tone of voice, that Georgina, terrified lest, *bon grè* or *malgré*, she should be led to join the waltzers, did not hear him; but Janet did—she saw, too, the admiring glance he, at the same time, cast towards her sister’s classic head and throat—and, forthwith, she made an excursion to that side of the room where Lady Kingsbury was sitting.

“Georgina,” she said, on coming back; “my

aunt is exceedingly fatigued, and, unless you wish particularly to remain, is anxious to return home."

"Oh, no; I am quite ready to go," replied Georgina, glad to see the waltzing question thus disposed of.

Mr. D' Esterre handed Georgina to the carriage; and perhaps he would not have declined a seat therein had one been offered. But Lady Kingsbury, coldly, bade him good night, and then, turning towards Miss Irving, said, with some earnestness—

"Janet, an end must be put to this—Mr. D' Esterre must find some one else to amuse himself with."

"Mr. D' Esterre?"

"Yes, Mr. D' Esterre. I have always doubted his sincerity, and now it is quite clear he has never been in earnest. Indeed I am much mistaken, if he does not mean to play the same game

with Georgy, he has done with you. But, I shall, certainly, interfere. I will *not* suffer both my nieces to be made fools of, by this vain young man—and so I shall give Mr. D' Esterre to understand, if he shows the slightest inclination to repeat his ridiculous behaviour of this evening."

"Pray, my dear aunt, do not. I entreat you will take no step which might annoy Mr. D' Esterre. I have the most perfect confidence in his honourable and upright feelings."

"Well," replied Lady Kingsbury, "you are old enough, I suppose, to judge for yourself—but people see things differently: in my opinion, Mr. D'Esterre is not in earnest; and by suffering him to dangle after you, you will only get the name of a forsaken, lovelorn damsel. Remember, Janet, there can be no greater disadvantage to a girl than to have it supposed her affections have been trifled with.

No man likes to venture on a woman thus circumstanced."

"I apprehend no danger of being condemned to wear the willow. Perceval is a highly principled man, who would scorn conduct so mean and paltry. His sincerity——"

"Sincerity!——why, child, he scarcely spoke to you the whole evening, and attached himself so closely to Georgina that it was impossible to shake him off. Quite troublesome, wasn't he, Georgy? I'm sure, I thought we should never have got rid of him."

"As to Mr. D'Esterre's not publicly devoting himself to me, it is nothing uncommon. No man shews the object of *serious* attachment much and marked attention before strangers—and with regard to his dancing with Georgina, I can look upon it in no other light than an indirect and delicate compliment to me——had he chosen any other woman in the room, I

might have felt uneasy—but my own sister—”

“Well,” said Lady Kingsbury, “as you will, Janet, as you will; only remember, I am not satisfied.” And Lady Kingsbury descended the carriage steps still speaking; but of her discourse Miss Irving only caught the words—“never marry—” and “my niece, Eliza Fitzgrove.”

“Georgina,” said she, while preparing to follow—“I see you are resolved to profit by my advice, and succeed to admiration. *Je vous en fais mon compliment.* You have quite established your character for wit—and may next aspire to be a *bas-bleu* or *belle esprit.*”

Georgina hardly knew whether her sister had spoken ironically or not—whether she intended encouragement or blame; still, she felt uncomfortable—and she began undressing in a frame of mind very foreign to that in which a triumphant beauty usually divests herself of

all the aids and adjuncts of her ball-room charms.

The diplomatic Janet observed this, and, fearful of losing her influence, by offending her sister, selected from her well filled trinket box a pair of pearl and turquoise ear-rings.

“Wear these for my sake, dearest Georgina, they are so becoming to you,” she said; holding the ornaments in such a manner as to show their full effect.

In a transport of gratitude, Georgina threw her arms round Janet’s neck. The ear-rings were badly set and old-fashioned—but of that she was not aware.

Before she fell asleep that night, Georgina came to the conclusion that men are most deceitful creatures; for she remembered that, more than once in the course of the evening, Mr. D’Esterre had alluded to her singing in terms of marked approval—and yet—to Janet, he had criticised it.

Are there many Janet Irvings in the world? I fear me, not a few—Envy is a plant of very common growth; it is, alas! the moral Upas tree of the domestic hearth, whose poisonous influence separates young hearts that should have loved, and grown together.

Sister, too often, envies sister—and brother brother. Cain envied Abel—and he smote, and slew him—the Patriarchs were moved with envy, and sold their brother for a slave.

Is the picture too highly coloured?—Alas!—no; the mind, this despicable passion sways, shrinks from no littleness—resorts to every artifice, to serve its purpose. Falsehood, detraction, calumny—these are the weapons envy loves to wield: and the wounds they leave are rarely healed without a scar; for, while the covetous man seeks to defraud us of our wealth, or the ambitious thrusts us on one side, that he may seize the prize we sought to grasp—the

envious spirit strikes at our happiness and peace of mind—our reputation, or good name. It is possible to replace wealth—ambition's loss is often a real gain ; but with our perished happiness we lose our power of enjoyment ; and a reputation sullied is, alas, a reputation lost.

There is a sort of stern nobility in pride, to which we yield involuntary homage—ambition too, even while it startles, fascinates and thralls for in both we see the towering offspring of : lofty heart : but Envy is a mean and grovelling feeling, which springs, like avarice, from a little mind. Twin sisters also—for, though the miser is not always envious, you will seldom find a disposition in which envy forms a striking feature, free from the love of gold.

CHAPTER IX.

THE next day, there was storm without, and gloom within. Lady Kingsbury professed a head-ache, and gave directions that no visitors should be admitted; Georgina was occupied in the disagreeable task of writing home for money; and Janet, more studiously dressed than usual, placed herself at the window, and watched the shifting clouds. Presently a knock at the door was heard, and, shortly after, the servant appeared, bearing in his hand Mr. D'Esterre's card.

"Mr. D'Esterre!" cried Lady Kingsbury, looking exceedingly irate. "Did I not give you orders to admit no one?"

"Yes, my Lady, but I thought—"

"In future, I must beg you will be kind enough not to think, but to obey my orders."

"Am I to say your Ladyship is not at home?"

"No; as he has thought proper to send up his card, I suppose we must admit him; though, I must say, I think he might have—"

What Mr. D'Esterre might have done remains a secret, for his entrance cut short Lady Kingsbury's speech—he was on the point of leaving Eastbeach, and came to make a formal farewell call. He addressed his conversation almost exclusively to Lady Kingsbury, and, when the brief visit was concluded, slightly touched the hands of both her young companions, and expressed a hope that they might meet in London.

There could be no doubt, whatever, that Miss Irving had deceived herself.

The door closed on this provoking gentleman—Lady Kingsbury looked at Janet, and her glance said, most expressively, “there, you see that I was right.” Then, placing herself at the window, she began to hum a tune; her Ladyship’s custom, when very much put out. In silence, Georgina folded and sealed her letter, while her sister appeared to have found something unusually interesting among the advertisements of the Morning Post; until another peal at the street door announced a fresh intruder, when she quickly vanished from the apartment.

“Very tiresome indeed!” cried Lady Kingsbury; “who can this be now? Mr. D’Esterre, I suppose, come back to see whether you are not both in hysterics. And I declare Robert is—”

"Mrs. Greenwood," said the domestic.

"What brings that stupid woman here again? She was here only the day before yesterday—Robert must be mad to let her in. I shall certainly discharge him."

"Ah, my dear Mrs. Greenwood, how are you—delighted to see you, pray take a seat. Miss Greenwood, I hope you are not the worse for your dissipation last night—you danced a great deal, I know ; a very pleasant, and well-conducted party it was."

"My daughter never dances much ;" (the poor girl had not stirred a step.) "She is delicate, and unequal to exertion. Besides, I am particular, very particular, about the acquaintances she forms," replied Mrs. Greenwood ; who, seeing Lady Kingsbury at the window, had fought her way in ; being actuated by the two-fold wish of escaping a threatened shower of rain, and of ascertaining the precise terms

on which Miss Irving and Mr. D'Esterre stood, with regard to each other.

"You are right—it is impossible to be too cautious in that respect."

"I don't see Miss Irving," said Mrs. Greenwood, looking round the room. Then, with an expression of mysterious sympathy, "I hope she is quite herself to day?"

"Perfectly;" quickly rejoined Lady Kingsbury; "Janet is perfectly well. She was here but a minute since, and is now, I believe, preparing for a walk: the weather seemed inclined to clear, and she wished to take advantage of it. My girls are great walkers. Does Miss Greenwood walk much?"

"A great deal, but never alone. I disapprove of young people wandering about without a proper escort—the young men of our day have become so unprincipled and selfish, they really seem to think women are created for no

other purpose than their amusement, and therefore, in my opinion, it is the duty of every mother to keep her daughter continually under her own eye. It is impossible to calculate the mischief she may thus avert."

"True, very true," observed Lady Kingsbury; all the time wishing her visiter at the bottom of the sea.

Georgina, meanwhile, underwent the usual visiting routine of question and reply.

"Did she like Eastbeach? Had she been there long? How much longer would she stay? Were they going to the ball on Monday?"

"Did she bathe? Had she heard of the shocking accident that had happened to Mrs. Smithson's youngest child?"

The latter was new to Georgina—and Miss Greenwood proceeded to inform her "that five of the little Smithsons, with two of their nursemaids, being in a machine, one fine day—no, it

wasn't a fine day—for the sea was rough, extremely rough. Well—they had been bathing, and the man drove off without making the usual signal—very wrong indeed, exceedingly careless—but those machine boys never think of anything. The nurse-maid lost her footing and fell against the back door, which gave way, and she was so dreadfully frightened that, in her anxiety to escape a bath—she dropped the child she was holding in her arms into the sea; and as they could not make the driver hear, the poor infant ran no small chance of being washed away."

"How very terrible!" said Georgina, "was it drowned?"

"No—they did contrive, at last, to stop the machine, and the bathing woman found the child, and brought it back. Are you fond of babies, Miss Berrington?"

"Not very. I like children when they are old

enough to walk about, and ask questions; but I can't say I am particularly fond of babies."

"Nor I—I think it is very vulgar to like babies—just like the servants and common people, you know."

At this moment, Georgina's attention was caught, by hearing Mrs. Greenwood exclaim, in a tone between doubt and astonishment,—

"You do indeed. surprise me;—so he has been refused—well, I must acknowledge, I cannot sympathise with him—so dreadfully conceited, and gave himself such airs. He wished to make our acquaintance, and desired an introduction to Maria—but, I threw cold water upon it. Such young men are dangerous associates for girls—and it is really quite at an end?"

"Entirely. In future, my niece, and Mr. D'Esterre will meet only as acquaintances."

"La," said Miss Greenwood, who had also heard these last sentences, "has Miss Irving

refused Mr. D'Esterre? That's the strangest thing I ever knew. Why they say he is quite a lady killer—and has broken the hearts of at least fifteen girls, already. Only think of his having been refused at last—I'm so glad."

"Come, my dear," said Mrs. Greenwood, burning with impatience to be off.

"I must entreat your secrecy," observed Lady Kingsbury, in a low voice, and her most friendly manner—"you know it is a point of honour to conceal these matters. On no account, would Janet have it generally known—but between friends—"

"I will not breathe a word of it. Maria, your parasol—good morning, my dear Miss Berrington—my kind regards to your sister—hope I shall have the pleasure of meeting her on the esplanade. It promises to be a lovely afternoon."

"Where shall we go now?" inquired Miss Greenwood, as they left the house.

"To Mrs. King Lewis's: I would not for the world she should hear the news from any one but me."

"What news?"

"Why, that this coxcomb has been refused."

"But Lady Kingsbury begged us not to mention it."

"Oh, that was a mere form, words of course. Here, take my arm—and pray don't shuffle so in walking—nothing is more inelegant," said Mrs. Greenwood, much out of humour with her daughter, because no one had asked her to dance, on the foregoing night.

They proceeded for a short distance in silence, and then Maria, herself a pale girl, with a long red nose, observed—

"I wonder what makes Miss Irving so popular? She certainly is not very handsome."

"I think her almost plain; small, insignificant features, and very little expression."

"I suppose, she has a large fortune."

"They say, fifteen thousand pounds—but, I don't believe she has half as much. However, the reputation of having it goes some way."

"Oh yes—people think of nothing but money. And, then, Lady Kingsbury is such an excellent chaperone—I dare say, too, that Miss Irving's having been introduced in town is a great advantage to her—people in the country always think so much of a London girl. Besides, Lady Kingsbury's having a carriage goes a great way in getting her nieces partners; I am sure, half the gentlemen who ask them to dance, only do it because they hope to be taken home after the ball."

"Yes; Miss Irving has some advantages which other girls have not: and she is sensible enough to make the most of them—in which respect, Maria, I wish you would follow her example—I do as much for you, as Lady Kings-

bury does for her nieces, but it is of little use ; you never think of seconding me."

"Dear mama, I'm sure I always try—I do every thing I can."

"Even now, with regard to Mr. D'Esterre—although you know how much I have done to bring about an acquaintance—so far from assisting my endeavours, you chose to return home the other evening, although Colonel Stafford had positively engaged to introduce you."

"If he had, it could have led to nothing ; Mr. D'Esterre is so much in love with Miss Irving, he would never think of anybody else."

"I did not expect Mr. D'Esterre to fall in love with you ; but he is a young man much looked up to, and considered in the world : and it is always an advantage to a girl to know such persons, even should the acquaintance never go beyond a bow."

"But, mama, my head ached to such a degree,

I really could not remain ; the room seemed to be swimming round and round—I thought I should have fainted.”

“ My dear Maria, these ailments of yours are very inconvenient. I wish you would learn to think less about them. If you were really ill, it would be quite another thing—but, indeed, a headache is such a trifle—nobody else would ever think about it. Besides, it is very foolish to be always complaining. Pray guard against the habit ; nothing is more prejudicial to a young woman than the notion that her health is bad ; few men will venture on a sickly wife.”

At this very moment, poor Maria’s head ached violently ; and when, after a long visit, they left Mrs. King Lewis’s heated room, crowded with idlers like themselves, she would gladly have returned home and laid it on her pillow ; but, afraid of vexing her judicious mother, she said nothing of her suffering.

Two years afterwards, Maria became a decided invalid—her complaint was in its nature trifling, and would easily have yielded to wise and early treatment; but concealment and neglect have aggravated symptoms which now threaten to prove permanent.—Her fate is no uncommon one.

CHAPTER X.

Two hours after the termination of Mrs. Greenwood's visit to Lady Kingsbury, all Eastbeach knew that Miss Irving had refused Mr. D'Esterre : the report was not, perhaps, generally believed—but it was widely circulated, and, in fact, reached farther than its author either wished or intended.

“ Georgina,” said Lady Kingsbury, when Mrs. Greenwood had taken her departure, “ the weather will not admit of my walking ; but you

and Janet will do well to shew yourselves on the Esplanade ; at least, if your sister be capable of such an exertion. Where is she ?”

“ Janet is above stairs, I believe.”

“ Pray go and tell her what I say.”

Georgina, still all astonishment at the mistake into which Lady Kingsbury had suffered her visiter to fall, ran hastily up stairs. Janet was lying down.

“ Who is that ?” she said, peevishly turning her face towards the wall.

“ Oh, I have disturbed you—how grieved I am. My dear, dear Janet, can I do nothing for you ?” And Georgy gently took her sister’s hand in hers.

“ No ;” replied Miss Irving, quickly withdrawing it. “ I want nothing.”

“ But were you asleep ?”

“ No ; it were little less than a miracle to sleep with all this talking in the room below. By the way, who has been here ?”

"Mrs. Greenwood and her daughter."

"Odious people! what did they come for?"

"Indeed, I can't tell; but do you know, Janet, there has been the most unfortunate mistake about you and Mr. D'Esterre."

"Ha!" exclaimed Janet, starting. "A mistake? How—what? Tell me every thing that passed."

Georgina complied; and ended by asking the best mode of correcting the error, which she persisted must have been accidental. To her amazement, Janet burst into a fit of laughter.

"My dear Janet," asked the astonished girl, "what are you laughing at? What is it that amuses you so very much?"

"Lady Kingsbury's ready wit, and quick invention, I never gave her credit for so much talent before."

"Indeed, Janet, I see neither wit nor talent in the business. Mrs. Greenwood was stupid

enough to fancy you had refused Mr. D'Esterre, and my aunt, from inattention, or absence of mind, suffered her to leave the house without correcting the mistake. Nor indeed did I, they hurried off so fast. But, you know, it must be done."

"I see no necessity for that."

"Nay, my dear Janet, if Mrs. Greenwood goes about telling every body that you have rejected Mr. D'Esterre, as I have no doubt she will—and we do not contradict the report, will it not be conniving at a falsehood?"

"No, my dear literal sister; for it is not a falsehood."

"Janet," said Georgina, opening her eyes, "do you mean to say that Mr. D'Esterre *did* ask you to marry him?"

"Not in those precise words, perhaps; still, without risking our characters for veracity, we may safely suffer Mrs. Greenwood to proceed in her career."

"I cannot understand you."

"Georgy, has it never occurred to you that if a woman apprehended a proposal she did not intend accepting, she would take measures to prevent it?"

"Oh yes; but surely, Janet, that has not been your case. Did you discourage Mr. D'Esterre?"

"It requires little to enable a man of D'Esterre's tact and discrimination to perceive that further attempts would be useless. Without wounding his feelings, I have made him plainly understand that more than friends we never can be. Unless, indeed, Georgy, you take pity on him—you know, it is not by any means uncommon for a man who has been refused by one sister, to offer to another."

"But I thought you liked him. What could have induced you to do this? Janet, you surely liked him."

“Georgy,” said Miss Irving, after a minute’s pause, “I will be frank with you. You must have remarked that my aunt’s great affection for me makes her anxious, too anxious, to see me well married.”

“Oh, yes, no one can help observing that.”

Miss Irving bit her lip.

“It is a very common feeling, this of Lady Kingsbury’s—one, I believe, all parents entertain, and she has been to me quite like a mother.”

“But what has this to do with your refusing Mr. D’Esterre?”

“You shall hear. When first I knew him, he appeared to unite much that is both attractive and eligible; that is to say, he is handsome, rich, well-born, and so on; and, knowing my aunt’s anxiety on the subject, I encouraged Mr. D’Esterre’s attentions, and my predilections in his favour, which latter, would in time,

I thought, reach that degree of preference every woman should entertain for the man she marries; but a further acquaintance has not strengthened my partiality; on the contrary, some trifling shades of character have betrayed themselves, at which my sensitive and very fastidious feelings took alarm, and I resolved to put an end to the affair at once, by making Mr. D'Esterre understand that any idea of a nearer intimacy was out of the question."

"And when did you do this?"

"Yesterday, during our walk. I was, therefore, quite prepared for what Lady Kingsbury chose to consider his inconstancy."

"Poor Mr. D'Esterre, he must have been very much disappointed."

"Men do not feel these things as we do, Georgy—their vanity may suffer, perhaps; but nothing further. In fact, I believe, very few men know what it is to feel at all."

"But why, Janet, did you not explain all this to my aunt, last night?"

"Because I knew it would vex her; and, for the same reason, you, dearest Georgina, will be equally silent. Besides, I wished to spare Mr. D'Esterre any further mortification on the subject; you remember how anxiously I endeavoured to prevent any change in my aunt's manner towards him."

Georgina was so astonished at all she heard that she quite forgot to deliver her aunt's message to Miss Irving, until the sound of that lady's voice upon the stairs recalled it to her remembrance.

"I believe my aunt is right," said Janet, rising from the bed. "The heat of the room last night has given me a head-ache; and the fresh air may, perhaps, remove it."

The out of doors toilet was speedily completed, and, in a few minutes they were walk-

ing on the Esplanade; Georgina looking graver—Janet, more gay, than usual: her animated conversation with Colonel Stafford only interrupted by the ready smile, or lively remark, with which she greeted the passing acquaintances. And people little thought how much there lay beneath that sparkling smile—that witty repartee.

For years, Janet's whole life had been one long deceit; it cost her, therefore, little or no effort to conceal her present feelings: her spirits were as high as though there had been no Perceval D'Esterre in existence; and, excepting that her manner towards Lady Kingsbury became more deferential, and towards Georgina more caressing, it exhibited no change; Georgina was completely puzzled (for the frank and guileless are always the readiest dupes), and Lady Kingsbury entirely misled. As far as concerned the latter, it had

been better had Janet shewn more openness; for, believing Miss Irving's peace of mind still unimpaired, Lady Kingsbury felt no hesitation in speaking on the subject; indeed, it seemed as if she never could exhaust it; and for days, even weeks, Mr. D'Esterre's duplicity and her niece's folly furnished her with a never-ceasing theme of conversation.

"Well, Georgy, what news? How is your father?" inquired Lady Kingsbury, one morning, not long after Mr. D'Esterre's departure, when Georgina had received a letter from home, which she perused with a somewhat blank expression of countenance.

"Thank you, papa is quite well; at least, as well as he ever is. But—but he wishes me to go back."

"Indeed! I did not expect so sudden a recal. I reckoned on your staying at least a month longer. Why does your father send for you in such a hurry?"

"Papa says, he thinks I have been away a long time : and that you, my dear aunt, must be as tired of my company as he is of my absence."

But Lady Kingsbury was not in the least tired of Georgina's society ; on the contrary, she was really sorry to lose a useful, obliging companion ; and, anxious to detain her, offered many tempting suggestions ; amongst the rest, an invitation to Major Berrington to join them there. Georgina, however, was satisfied this would never suit her father ; and Lady Kingsbury, finding her efforts ineffectual, at length consented to her return ; at the same time, kindly enough insisting that her own maid should accompany her. Accordingly, Georgina and Mrs. Turner were packed into a post-chaise, and, without meeting with an adventure, or even the shadow of one, arrived at Atherley.

It were false and unnatural to say Georgina returned to Atherley precisely the same being she left it. In heart and affections, she was, it is true, unchanged; but her tastes and opinions had undergone much alteration. The slight glimpse she had obtained of the gay world was just enough to dazzle and enchant; while the inconvenient, melancholy Grange, with its dingy rooms, its creaking doors, damp walls, and smoky chimnies, formed but a sorry contrast with the lively, cheerful residence she had lately left. Georgina felt the want of a thousand things she had never missed before — caught a severe cold the evening of her arrival — and found it necessary to make a strong effort ere she could prevail upon herself to swallow the ill-cooked, greasy dinner, not rendered more tempting by being served upon a very spotty table-cloth.

One of the most trying consequences of a

narrow income is that want of entire cleanliness, almost inseparable from poverty. It is all very well to talk of linen being coarse, yet rivalling the drifted snow; of neat-handed Phillis's, whose cheerfulness and ready dexterity forestall your wants, and convert the simple viands that they place before you into a feast an epicure might envy.

Alas ! good reader, such are met with but in books ; exist but in the poet's fanciful imagination. In real life *c'est bien autre chose* ; for washing (I am sorry to allude to such vulgarities,) is expensive ; those, therefore, who cannot afford to keep a laundress, or pay a heavy weekly bill, must be content to have their table linen somewhat more than coarse ; and persons who have not a proper complement of servants should not be too fastidious in their food.

Autumn was far advanced—the sullen wind

murmured the dirge of the departing year, and softly wafted to their mother earth the parched and rustling leaves: the sky was veiled in mist and cloud, and those few flowers that still remained were little prized; they were not linked with thoughts of joy or pleasure — neither spring's harbingers were they, nor summer's gorgeous crown—but they were like that sad and sickly smile that sometimes gleams athwart the countenance of age, when the wild dream of youth flits back upon the soul, and we forget what we now are, in thought of what we have been.

All was desolation without, and parsimonious discomfort within. After the first burst of pleasure, with which he greeted his daughter, had subsided, Major Berrington became gloomy and desponding, occasionally morose. His time was principally spent in writing, always to him a painful, wearying exertion; and, when

forced by the increasing dimness of his vision, to lay by his pen, he would seat himself before the cheerless, sparingly supplied fire—and, in spite of all Georgina's efforts to amuse or entertain him, remain for hours plunged in a gloomy reverie.

Alas! the poor man had abundant food for bitter meditation. On selling his commission, tempted by a somewhat higher rate of interest than is usual, he had been induced to lend part of the purchase money on a mortgage, which now proved insecure. And thus, not only was a portion of his little wealth endangered, but his income materially diminished, precisely at a moment when his expenses had been unavoidably increased; and, to augment his difficulties, it happened that one of his old creditors, who had been hitherto perfectly satisfied with the mere interest of his money, being himself in want of a few ready hundreds, called for a

refused to make a few absolute repairs, unless the house-rent were ably raised.

No wonder Major Berrington and took small interest in George's picture of Eastbeach and its delirium, either, that, under so many gloominesses, she found her picture extremely dull, flat, stale, and unprofitable.

CHAPTER XI.

DISMAL as was the Grange, the Cottage, where dwelt Miss Rocket and the five Miss Arnolds, was hardly more enlivening; for, during Georgy's absence, Captain Slycer had "left his love for gold," and Belinda wore the willow. This young lady belonged to the romantic school: she was remarkable for forming friendships, more warm than lasting—fancied herself in love with every single man she chanced to meet—and, on the present occasion, chose to

enact the broken-hearted. Accordingly, she wandered about alone, read sentimental books, and wrote sentimental verses, sat up half the night apostrophising the moon (starving was also tried, but, being blessed with a good appetite, the experiment proved unpleasant, and was given up), maintained a perpetuity of sighs, warbled soft ditties, and talked about her base betrayer, until she nearly drove her aunt and sisters frantic.

"What news?" said Rebecca, who was in the habit of paying a daily visit at the Grange, "what news from your landlord?"

"None," replied Major Berrington. "I had no letters by this day's post."

"Which, according to the old adage (there is a great deal of truth in these old adages), means, good. You will stay here on your own terms."

"I fear that, in this instance, the maxim will

not prove correct. When a man means to meet your wishes, he loses no time in telling you so ; it is only when he intends a refusal that there is delay. All shrink from doing what is disagreeable ; and few persons are so thoroughly unamiable but that they would rather grant than refuse a favour."

"Then, if Mr. Cromwell finds it unpleasant to refuse, he will, of course, consent, and you are still secure."

"You forget the temptation of an additional ten or fifteen pounds a year."

"Ten or fifteen pounds a year ! What can ten or fifteen pounds a year be to a man of his wealth ? Why, I understand that, in addition to the money he inherited from his uncle, he cleared, at least, five thousand pounds last year, merely by that malting business."

"Ah, Rebecca, but people who clear five thousand a year are exactly the persons who

look sharp after every ten or fifteen pounds; and, as such is the way of the world, I must make up my mind to expect nothing better. Still, it would cost me something to be obliged to leave this old familiar place, which has, indeed, become almost a portion of myself; and this I must hold myself prepared to do."

"Perhaps not; at any rate, we must not anticipate evil; rather, my dear friend, look to the blessings and comforts that still remain; and, let me tell you, it's no trifling one to have such a girl as Georgy for a daughter. Come here, my dear," said Rebecca to Georgina, who then entered the room, "I've just been telling your papa what a good thing it is you have come back heart-whole, like a sensible, well-conducted girl, instead of making a fool of yourself, like my niece Belinda. She puts me out of all patience; I declare, the way she's going on is enough to make one mad; nor can

I, for the life of me, imagine what has made her so ridiculous. The other girls are sensible enough; I suppose it is those trashy love stories she is so fond of reading; certainly, they are enough to turn any girl's head; and, if I had my will, not one of them should come into my house. An old friend of mine used to say that most romances were like Pandora's box, full of all manner of evil. And poetry is not much better."

"Oh, indeed!" cried Georgina, "you must not speak in that way. When I was at East-beach, I read a great deal of poetry, and I have never been more amused with any thing."

"Might not your time have been better employed, Georgina?"

"Ah, that was what Lady Kingsbury used to say: yet she never thought walking and driving about, or paying visits, loss of time; and that was the manner in which almost

then, the carriage ordered, the
in leaving cards at people's hou
or driving in the Park until it
in to dinner. Now, I am sur
time, and losing it very disagre

"There is no doubt of it,"
Major Berrington, smiling at
warmth.

"Very true," replied Rebec
no excuse for doing one wrong
that another is just as absurd or

"And yet it is thus the majc
defend themselves," observed Ge

"Well," retorted Miss Rock
her original grievance; "I w
would persuade Belinda to conch

"We must make some allowances for her; Captain Slycer has behaved infamously."

"Yes; he has proved himself to be a sorry knave. But I tell my niece that, instead of breaking her heart for so good-for-nothing a fellow, she ought to be glad he shewed himself in his true colours before it was too late. Besides, notwithstanding all the piece of work she's making, between ourselves, I don't believe Belinda cared one atom for the man himself; like other silly girls, she thought it a fine thing to be married, but nothing more. But Georgy, how does it happen you have escaped so well amongst all the fine gentleman you must have met at Eastbeach?" concluded Miss Rocket, who had half a suspicion Georgina was not altogether insensible to Maurice's affection.

"Indeed," replied Georgina, laughing, "nobody seemed to think my heart worth trying for. And if any one had, I doubt whether it

would have been of any avail. I sometimes think I am not worth a heart."

"Because at seventeen you have not yet contrived to lose it."

"I shall be eighteen, in a few days," replied Georgina, with a slight touch of offended dignity: for girls of her age are usually very tenacious of being allowed their full complement of years.

"I trust," observed Major Berrington in a tone of sadness, "you may never learn by bitter experience, that you are as weak, and fond, and affectionate, as other women."

"Pooh!" retorted Miss Rocket. "Women are not one bit more apt to fall in love than men. It's nothing but your vanity that makes you think so."

"You are not more apt, nor even so apt, to fall in love as we are; but where the affections are engaged, it becomes a far more serious

business with you than with us. Man's love is but a fancy—light and transitory as all fancies are,—women's is a feeling—deep, strong, abiding—which he who trifles with is, in my opinion, a most despicable wretch.”

“No woman of sense would let herself be trifled with. At any rate, I should like to see the man who could make a fool of me.” (And Rebecca drew herself up with maiden dignity.) “You need’nt laugh, Georgina; *I* have had my admirers as well as other people.”

“Oh yes; I know you have,” replied Georgina, dreading the repetition of a certain passage in Miss Rocket’s earlier life, wherewith she was fond of edifying the younger members of the family.

“Well then, I hope you will act as prudently. I have never had occasion to regret it, I assure you. It’s better to be an old maid without encumbrances, or anxieties, and my own mis-

tress, than a poor, pining, drooping wife—with ten children, and a cross, sick husband.—Besides—an improvident marriage is not only foolish, it is absolutely wicked.” (Major Berrington uttered a sigh, which Rebecca, in her excitement, did not hear.) “We are not to think only of ourselves. For my part, I’ve no patience with persons who marry for their own gratification, and then expect other people to provide for their families. But what have we here?—a letter by the cross post—a double letter—good news, I warrant.”

Major Berrington thought otherwise; such an accumulation of trouble had come upon him latterly, he felt as though it were impossible anything but evil could befall; and his hand trembled so violently it was with difficulty he broke the seal.

“Goodness! what has happened? What can it be? Major, Major, you are mad?” cried

Rebecca, seizing the open letter which had fallen to the ground; while Major Berrington, with tearful eyes, and clasped hands, uttered an expression of fervent gratitude.

“ Well,” said Miss Rocket, after running her eye over the writing, Georgina, you *are* a lucky girl—six thousand a year—a place in ——shire; a jointure of twelve hundred, in addition to whatever your father will give; such a handsome man too; didn’t I hear you tell my girls that Mr. D’Esterre was the handsomest man in Eastbeach?”

“ No;” said Georgina, replying to the only portion of Miss Rocket’s speech she could in any measure comprehend. “ Mr. D’Esterre was not the handsomest man in Eastbeach. There were Colonel Stafford, and Mr. Oswald, who were both reckoned handsomer; but he was the most elegant looking.”

“ Ah, well, in future, Georgy, he must be

your handsomest man, everywhere. There, read your letter. Major, say, am I not a true prophetess? No fear of creditors, no leaving Atherley ; with your daughter so well married, you will never feel the want of money. I wish you joy—I wish you joy with all my heart.” And, carried away by the ecstasy of her feelings, the kind-hearted Rebecca suddenly threw her arms around the neck of the astonished Major Berrington, and imprinted a most sonorous kiss upon his wrinkled forehead.

Georgina was in a state of complete bewilderment. Twice she read the letter Miss Rocket had put into her hands without comprehending the exact intention of the writer. The third time she was more successful ; assisted by Rebecca’s commentary, she understood, at length, that her despatch contained neither more nor less than a formal offer of Perceval D’Esterre’s much sought-for hand.

And when she succeeded in rousing herself from the almost painful reverie to which so strange a circumstance had given rise, it was to perceive, from the discourse between Rebecca and her father, not only that her acceptance of the proposal was not questioned for a moment, but that it involved her parent's welfare, his happiness, almost his personal safety.

"You must lose no time in answering these letters," said Miss Rocket. "You see Mr. D'Esterre has mistaken our post town, and so lost a day. Write at once; a few lines will do, you know; and I can put the letters in the post on my way home. Georgy, you're the luckiest girl I ever knew or heard of."

"Do you think," asked Georgina, timidly, "that Mr. D'Esterre can be attached to me?"

"To be sure I do. Why else should he wish to marry you?"

"Indeed I can't tell: but—but—but I used

to think—he always seemed to admire Janet more than me.”

“ All a blind, my dear ; rely upon it ; nothing but a blind. It’s a very common trick with men to pay a great deal of attention to a woman they don’t care a straw about, and very little to the girl they really love.”

“ That appears to me neither altogether honourable towards the one, nor flattering towards the other.”

“ As for flattery, the days are past when a man used to sigh, and pine, and so on ; he thinks it quite enough, now, to tell a girl of the honour he intends her, and we mus’nt expect more ; especially, when a gentleman of Mr. D’Esterre’s fortune and family takes it into his head to marry a girl without a shilling. So don’t quarrel with him for his want of devotedness ; remember, that the less love-making before, the more there will be, after, marriage.

As for your sister, I'll be bound he knew well enough what he was about; and that she was no more likely to fall in love with him than he with her."

"But," replied Georgina in a low tone, "I know so little of Mr. D'Esterre, I really do not care for him."

"That will come, all in good time; but come, begin your letter; what do you mean to say? The Major must have nearly finished his." Georgina glanced towards her father, who was seated at a writing table at the further end of the room; her reluctance gave way, and, under Rebecca's dictation, she completed the customary answer.

No time was there for reflection on that day, nor even on the following; for Rebecca spread the news, and the Miss Arnolds, Mrs. Tremlett, Mrs. Smith, Miss White, and every other Mistress and Miss who visited at the Grange called

thanking Georgina for the he
done him.

“The honour I have done
she, “then, surely, he must h
never would consider it an ho
me.”

And, from that moment, Geo
be in love. Georgina, who was
heart to give to any one! But,
haps it was not very singular.
was young, handsome, agreeable
every one; the homage he tender
in every way superior, would
accepted; the wealth he offered
bounded; and, above all, he was
who had professed to love her.

will be by this," thought Charlotte Arnold, as she walked along the road which led from Atherley to Marston. He was expected to ride over and spend that afternoon at home. They met; in an instant Maurice was off his horse, the reins over one arm, his sister leaning on the other. A slender roll of music paper projected from his bosom. Charlotte knew for whom it was intended, and she felt her task more difficult.

"Well," he cried gaily, "what news, Charlotte? What has happened since I have been away? Has Belinda found her wits again? or was Miss Flagge carried off by last night's hurricane? Or, has our venerable aunt resolved to take a wife?"

"A wife, Maurice? You mean a husband."

"No, a wife. I consider, she approximates so much nearer to our sex than yours, that

act either."

" I don't know ; people, who
inveighing against a folly, are
to commit it. And so I
expectation of seeing the cha
nounce her vows ; it would I
would it not, Charlotte?"

Charlotte looked anxiously
was in high spirits—and it
check his gaiety ; Maurice was
high spirits. Still she saw it
and she must do it. No one told
him half so well ; no one else
gently with his wounded feelings
painful effort, therefore, she was
the sort of creature he had met

"Georgy is going to be married? Georgy is going to be married?" he exclaimed wildly.

"Impossible! I cannot realise it."

"Indeed, dear Maurice, it is a settled thing."

"And—and—does she love Mr. ——? What did you say he calls himself?"

"D'Esterre."

"Aye, D'Esterre—does Georgy love ——?"
(Maurice could not finish the sentence.)

"I believe, at least, we must hope so, for her sake."

"Yes, yes, for her sake. Yet, is it not very sudden—unexpected?"

"Entirely; until she received the proposal, Georgina had no suspicion of his attachment."

"When was that?"

"Only yesterday; the cross post brought a letter from Mr. D'Esterre."

"And was the offer accepted without hesitation? Was there no struggle on her part?"

“In Major Berrington’s unhappy circumstances, there is—there can be no alternative.”

“True; and she *has* accepted him? I can scarcely yet believe it.”

“Georgina had no choice. And a favourable reply to Mr. D’Esterre’s offer went by last night’s post.”

“How very strange it seems!”

“I knew how much it would surprise you; and therefore came to meet and tell you.”

Maurice wrung his sister’s hand.

“Good afternoon,” he said.

“Will you not come on? They are expecting you at home.”

“Not now—not yet. I cannot see her yet.”

Then, springing on his horse, he galloped towards Marston.

When Charlotte returned home, she found her sisters engaged in various tasks of useful needle-work, while Miss Rocket, seated at the

head of the table, held in her hand a large, old-fashioned looking book.

"Well," she cried, laying down the volume, "what have you done with Maurice?"

"Maurice is returned to Marston."

"Aye, vexed to have lost Georgina, I suppose; foolish boy, I told him what it would come to."

"I am interrupting you," observed Charlotte.

"Not at all. I was only reading a paper out of the Spectator to the girls, for fear they should all die of envy at Georgina's luck. It's the history of a lady who was blessed with no less than six husbands. Just hear what she says of them all." Then, resuming the book, Miss Rocket read, in a loud stentorian voice, as follows:—"My first insulted me, my second was nothing to me, my third disgusted me, my fourth would have ruined me, the fifth tormented me, and the sixth would have starved

me.' There, young ladies, what do you think of that?"

"It is a caricature," said one.

"All the better likeness, then," rejoined her aunt.

"It is very improbable," observed another.

"No woman ever had six husbands."

"She would not have survived if she had," replied Miss Rocket. "One, or at the utmost two, would be the death of any woman; half a husband would have done my business, with his fancies and his fidgets; men are made up of fancies."

"Oh!" cried Belinda, "if you knew—"

"My dear Belinda, we do all know very well how ridiculous you are. Pray let us hear no more about it. Charlotte, did you call in on Nanny Simpkins?"

"Yes; she is better, quite out of danger."

"I'm glad to hear it. Ring the bell for lights. How short the days are growing."

"You are very industrious," said Charlotte, observing with what zeal Miss Rocket plied her knitting needles.

"I am in a hurry to finish this for Maurice; he'll suffer from the winds these sharp wintry nights."

"Maurice will never wear it," muttered Belinda.

"Very likely. I'm afraid he will be more careless of himself than ever, now. Silly fellow—if he had only listened to my advice two years ago, and married Miss Flaxman with her ten thousand pounds—but he wouldn't even hear of it. Love seems to make a man deaf, as well as blind. However, it's no use fretting now. Jane, stir the fire."

CHAPTER XII.

TOWARDS the close of the week, a most exquisitely appointed travelling equipage drew up before the little postern gate of Major Berrington's old-fashioned residence; and, after a few seconds of delay, similar in its nature to that which had marked Lady Kingsbury's arrival, Mr. D'Esterre, dressed in the perfection of fashionable elegance, alighted. He was met midway by Major Berrington, while Georgina remained in the little parlour,

feeling and looking most excessively awkward.

The meeting between the young people was very constrained; the tête-à-tête Major Berrington most considerably forwarded by absenting himself from the room, still worse; and all were glad when it was time to separate to dress for dinner. After that repast matters improved; in common with the generality of men of his rank and standing in the army, Major Berrington was an agreeable companion; Perceval had lived much in the world, they found many topics mutually interesting, and, with the assistance of a little music (not, as may be supposed, in Georgina's very best style), the evening passed rapidly.

The next day was spent in talking over settlements, and various improvements then in progress at Ringland, Mr. D'Esterre's country seat. During this discussion, a keen observer might have detected a slight expression of con-

temptuous satire in his handsome mouth, as Georgina, to whose taste he deferred the furniture and hangings of the drawing and breakfast-rooms, in support of her opinion, occasionally quoted Mrs. King Lewis's, or Lady Burton's, houses, at Eastbeach. Georgina, however, was not one of those quick-sighted persons, and her heart swelled with gratitude towards the man who, though so infinitely her superior, could yet thus condescend to learn her wishes, and consult her taste.

On the morrow he departed, to the infinite dissatisfaction of the Atherley ladies, both old and young, who had been all anxiety to form their own judgment respecting him ; but whose wishes, owing to the abruptness of his movements, were not gratified. And even Perceval's alleged motive, that of hurrying the workmen, in order that the marriage might take place with as little delay as possible, proved insuffi-

cient to pacify the disappointed fair ones; nor could a splendid diamond ring, which, from that day sparkled upon Georgina's hand, prevent grave looks, and ominous assertions, that "Mr. D'Esterre, undoubtedly, was very odd—they hoped Miss Berrington would be happy with him—but, certainly, there was no denying he was very unlike other people." Some of the young ladies affirmed they would not marry such a man for the whole world: and their mamas agreed it would be a very great risk.

Georgina, meanwhile, was deep in consultation with Charlotte and Miss Rocket, respecting her future wardrobe; and, in truth, it was a matter needing both thought and management; for Major Berrington had presented his daughter with a fifty pound bank note, and, after explaining the embarrassment of his finances, begged that, if possible, she would limit her expenses to that sum.

Fifty pounds for wedding clothes!—For the trousseau of the future mistress of Ringland—the bride of the well-dressed, fastidious D'Esterre! Even Rebecca was posed.

“Well,” she said, after one of the many dissertations that were held upon the subject, “if I go to town, as it seems very probable I must, perhaps I shall be able to do something for you there; every thing is cheaper and better in London.”

“Oh yes;” replied Georgina, “I know there is the greatest possible difference. London mantua makers are quite superior, especially the French; and Mr. D'Esterre said, the other day, that his mother, Lady Gertrude, never wears any thing that is not made by Madame Duval. I should like very much to employ Madame Duval for some of my things; that is to say, if she is not too extravagant.”

“We can but see. Do you know where she lives?”

"No: I forgot to get her address; but Lady Kingsbury employs a French milliner, and I will ask for her's."

"Have you written to Lady Kingsbury to tell her of your marriage?"

"No, not yet."

"Then pray lose no more time."

Georgina found some little difficulty in communicating tidings, which she thought, might not, perhaps, be altogether welcome, either to her aunt or sister; for she remembered Lady Kingsbury's anxiety to see Miss Irving married to Perceval D'Esterre, and now she was herself becoming alive to his many perfections, she placed less confidence in Janet's assertions of perfect indifference. How could any one remain indifferent to Perceval?

But this apprehension was totally unfounded. Lady Kingsbury would, certainly, have preferred that Mr. D'Esterre had continued con-

office, she was happy in ref
proposing to Georgina, he ha
best thing. Lady Kingsbury
fore gratified by the intelliger
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trifling awkwardness in ann
friends at Eastbeach that
whom latterly she had been
cry down—whom she affirme
jected by her elder niece, was
of marrying the younger.

But she was well skilled in tl
and under her management, fir
had before described, vain, &
ruined—Perceval gained that
lence, usually accorded to all y

fine young man ; every thing a parent could desire ; quite worthy of Georgina." All men are thus previous to their marriage ; how odd it is so few continue to deserve their reputation.

"Dear, how strange !" said Maria Greenwood, "Mr. D'Esterre is going to marry Miss Berrington, after having been refused by her sister. Why then he must have been in love with both of them at once !"

"Not at all ;" replied her mother in an acrimonious tone ; for, excepting where their own daughters are concerned, mamas seldom hear of splendid marriages with feelings of complacency—"it is not at all odd ; a disappointed man is always easily attracted ; if you had managed properly, he might, perhaps, have even thought of you. Now, don't loll about in that manner ; you will certainly grow crooked."

Maria raised herself from her leaning position, and resumed the occupation she had momentarily laid by.

“ By the way,” asked her mama, “ have you been practising the duett you are to sing to-night?”

“ Not this morning. I was anxious to finish washing in these neutral tints; if I leave them now, my drawing will be spoilt.”

“ That’s of no consequence. Drawing is very unimportant; in fact, no one knows whether a girl draws or not; and the stooping position, people generally acquire who draw much, is exceedingly inelegant; besides hurting the complexion — your nose looks very red indeed, to-day, Maria. Pray let me hear you go over that duett; you sang horribly out of tune, the other night.”

“ Mama, I had a cold,” Maria began, then recollecting how much Mrs. Greenwood disliked such excuses, suddenly checked herself, and *faute de mieux*, returned to Mr. D’Esterre’s marriage. “ Perhaps,” she said, while putting by her drawing, “ as Mr. D’Esterre seems so

apt to lose his heart, Miss Berrington may not be very happy with him, after all."

"I'm not of your opinion. Mr. D'Esterre's forgetting Miss Irving is nothing out of the common; and, as he is a gentleman of good family and fortune, I know no reason why Miss Berrington should not be perfectly happy. At any rate, I should be very glad to see you change places with her."

"And so should I," thought Maria. "Mama grows more cross and snappish every day."

There was truth enough in poor Maria's observation; yet Mrs. Greenwood was not deficient in affection for her daughter; on the contrary, it was anxiety for what she considered her most important interests that rendered her thus peevish and unfeeling. Pity it was that her solicitude took not a higher and a better aim. Maria might then have kept her health, and Mrs. Greenwood her good temper. Peace follows in the train of piety.

CHAPTER XIII.

IN writing to Georgina, Lady Kingsbury expressed herself highly delighted with her projected marriage : she did not, it is true, propose to grace the nuptial ceremony with her presence, for the bare notion of the Grange in the month of December made her Ladyship's teeth chatter ; but she sent many kind messages, and, what was even more acceptable, a draft upon her banker for thirty pounds.

Janet wrote as follows — “ Was I not right ?

Did I not say truly, dearest Georgy, when I told you Perceval would turn to you, to heal the wound I had inflicted? Yes, my sweet sister, I foresaw it all; and in the same prophetic spirit do I now foretell that you will make his happiness, and he yours.

“You are indeed admirably calculated for each other; even those traits in D’Esterre’s character which were to me objectionable, will prove, perhaps, attractive in your eyes. Suffer me, however, to offer you one counsel; never hint your knowledge of his having been refused by me. Men are quite as vain as we are; and you will greatly wound his feelings, perhaps exasperate his temper, by alluding to that unhappy business. Oh! how I wish I could be with you, above all be present at your marriage. Alas, it is impossible. Lady Kingsbury has been much indisposed lately, and will not hear of my leaving her; but my best prayers, and

I wished her to make a suit of jewels, but she fancied money acceptable. It is strange how some, even well-meaning persons

“Farewell, dearest—offer my regards and congratulations to ton. What will he do without I must coax him to adopt me; Georgina.”

Janet threw down the pen exclaimed, bitterly, “I am not this—in everything, what is compared with hers? Perceval—you are not worth a tear!”

But matches have been broken then not this? For some time

and turning in her mind by what agency it might be accomplished. An anonymous communication? The chances of detection were too great, and the success too uncertain. Should she then repair to Atherley, and by personal influence endeavour to achieve her wished-for purpose? This expedient carried with it many recommendations; it would prove equally her indifference to Perceval, and her affection for Georgina; whilst on the spot she would perceive a thousand means of which she might avail herself; and long did Janet try to bring her mind to prosecute the plan; but it was impossible. She could not be a witness of her sister's happiness — of Perceval's inconstancy. The business then must run its course — the hated union be completed — she could only hope that it would prove unhappy; and she derived much consolation from the conviction that, in all probability, so very fickle an

and, from this time, her fancy pictured a future, teen bright, joyous, and delightful self the happy mistress of a superior, to any she had ever of Perceval's affection—the piness to others, and, above father. It is true, nothing Major Berrington's residing she, aware of his attachment home, forebore to press the her own mind, she had qui should live with them, and ha the room which, according Ringland, would suit him. | vivid imagination sketched an

Oh ! why are the realities of life so different from its hopes ? Why do we find a worm in every gourd, a canker in the fairest bud, a thorn near every rose ? Is it not, that we should ever bear in mind that this is not our home ?

Mr. D'Esterre's letters were not frequent, but they contained glowing descriptions of the improvements he was making to embellish Georgina's future residence ; he sent, also, some very splendid presents ; and even carried his solicitude to the length of begging she would oblige him by employing Lady Gertrude's milliner. Georgina, delighted she possessed the power of gratifying one whose affection she could not for an instant doubt—whose thoughts so perpetually recurred to her—gladly entrusted Miss Rocket (now called to London for the first time since quite a girl), with the delightful task of ordering her wedding dress from Madame Regnier.

her as her companion.

"What a relief Belinda's marked one of the Miss Arn after their departure."

"Yes," replied Jane, "but hard my aunt should have given the preference. It would have been if we had all cast lots about she might have given us each

"You forget my aunt said Belinda because she is so silly she never likes to have her own

"That's a very poor excuse for behaviour. I believe, however, in ten cases out of ten, selfish, ill-considered, and thousand times that

and so give up to all their whims, often even at the expense of others. It really appears very bad policy to be well-conducted."

"If you look only to this world, perhaps it is," observed Charlotte.

"Ah, that is one of Maurice's speeches. Charlotte, how much alike you are!"

"We are twins, you know."

"If I were Maurice, I should call out Mr. D'Esterre," cried the youngest Miss Arnold, who thought herself a girl of spirit.

"Poor Maurice! I wonder Georgina never guessed how fond he is of her."

"Oh, she is so used to it; she has been his pet since she was quite a child."

"What a nice thing it must be to marry a man of fortune!" said Jane.

"That would depend upon the gentleman you married," remarked Miss Flagge; who,

during Rebecca's absence, was staying with her nieces, as a sort of chaperone.

"I shouldn't care what the man was like. Only think of the delight of having everything one fancied, and of being admired and praised by all the world!"

"Does that necessarily follow?"

"To be sure it does: just look at Georgina, what a change her engagement has made! A little while ago, people, some, at least, allowed her to be pretty, but nothing further, and scarcely anybody noticed her or Major Berrington. Now we hear of nothing but her beauty and grace, and every other perfection; while the very same persons, who formerly neglected her, are trying who can show most civility. Both Lady Wrighton and Mrs. Daymour have given pressing invitations to their houses. The change is, really, quite amusing. I tell Georgina she will be obliged,

soon, to play queen, and hold a drawing-room."

"Will those invitations be accepted?" enquired Theresa.

"Oh, dear no. Major Berrington never stirs from home; and, of course, Georgina will not think of leaving him."

"Maurice, how are you?" cried Charlotte, to her brother, who just then entered the apartment.

With a look and tone which gave the lie to his assertion, Maurice assured her he was well.

"We have been discoursing on the benefits of being rich," said Jane, addressing the newcomer.

"You chose an ample subject for discussion."

"Ample, indeed," rejoined Miss Flagge. "I would fain persuade my young friends that money, in itself, is not quite the mighty talis-

man they seem to think. Riches are, certainly, great blessings, but we must be careful not to overrate their value."

"That would not be an easy task," replied Maurice; smarting from the consequence of his rival's superior wealth. "Money, if not in itself the first of earthly advantages, is, at any rate, the key to every other. What is there money will not purchase?"

"Contentment—which is one of the foundation stones of happiness. The rich are, almost always, peevish and dissatisfied."

"I agree with you;" said Charlotte: "indeed, I feel quite confident, that could we enter every dwelling in the land, we should find the balance of happiness nearly even—the poor have their real trials—the rich, their fancied ones. The obligation to employment is in itself a blessing—many people, I am convinced, fret away their happiness, simply, from want of better occupation."

"Charlotte," asked Maurice, abruptly, "will you go with me to Major Berrington's? It is some time since I was there."

In a few minutes they had reached the Grange. Georgina was from home: she had gone with Mrs. Beachcroft, to return some of the civilities that, as Jane Arnold very truly said, had originated in her altered prospects. Maurice felt her absence a relief; a few weeks back, and her society had been his dearest happiness—and yet, he was not changed. Alas!—his were not feelings soon to alter.

When the visit was nearly concluded, Miss Berrington returned. Excepting for an instant, Maurice durst not trust himself to look at her: but the slight transitory glimpse he caught told, too plainly told, that she was happy—and his heart tightened—it seemed so hard that she who caused his misery should neither heed nor pity it.

"Georgy, there is a letter for you upon that table," said her father.

Georgina made no attempt to take the packet ; she did not even interrupt a lively description she was giving of her morning's occupation ; but, she looked conscious, very conscious ; and when the Arnolds motioned to depart, made no effort to detain them. Maurice observed all this, and he left the house more sad and dark in spirit than he entered it.

"Charlotte, you saw Mr. D'Esterre?"

"Yes, for a few minutes."

"Describe him to me."

"I hardly can ; I saw so very little of him. I do not think I heard him speak three words."

"What is he like in person?"

"To me, there appeared nothing about Mr. D'Esterre remarkable one way or the other. Just the sort of well dressed, conceited looking man you meet with in every ball-room."

(Charlotte felt sore on Maurice's account) "Why do you wish to know?"

"Because she loves him. Yes," he continued mournfully, "Georgina loves him."

"So recent an attachment cannot be very deep."

"It is better she should. Yes; better even for me. Hopeless affection is never long enduring. Farewell."

"Nay, but you must stay and dine with us; you must indeed. We see so little of you now."

"Another time; to-day I cannot. I have one or two poor people at Marston who require looking after."

"Maurice, you work too hard."

"I have no choice: nothing but constant occupation drives away the thought"—then seeing how anxious, and unhappy Charlotte looked, he checked himself, and added in a lighter tone; "But do not fret on my account;

you know, we all need discipline, I, most especially; and it will not last long; the struggle will soon be over."

As Maurice spoke, he smiled; but it was a ghastly, mocking smile. Charlotte turned hastily away; his words conveyed a double meaning—might they not be prophetic?

CHAPTER XIV.

BELINDA ARNOLD TO GEORGINA BERRINGTON.

Thursday, Arundel-street, Strand.

" DEAREST GEORGINA,

" I SNATCH up my pen to inform you of our safe arrival in this great Metropolis, and to give you some particulars of our (to me perhaps eventful) journey. Our fellow travellers consisted of a glover from Marston, a quiet, respectable man, I dare say, but quite out of my way; and a person who had once been housekeeper at the Duke of L——s. With her accustomed volubility, my Aunt entered into conversation with both these persons; whilst I, in pensive silence, gazed on the passing objects, and fed my grief with thoughts of Slycer. Oh!

in a blue coat and yellow waistcoat, attracted the most marked attention: and his politeness, his attentions and fascinating remarks, his good looks, and the long forgotten smile to my remembrance, I was positively sorry, when I met a man with a great red face, but a pleasant *l'ête-a-tête*, and I exchanged my former companion for the vulgar glover, and the latter, happily, got out at last. When we changed horses, and then, I was content on perceiving that the carriage was filled by my inamorato; for I may style this charming young man my inamorato, how different became the scene which, you may easily believe, was the most distinguished part. My new acquaintance addressed me with great politeness: and, on learning that I was from London, its dangers, its fascinations, gave us much excellent advice. I was at length of asking if his service

Aunt the propriety of inviting him to call upon us ; but she would not. I must say, I think her backwardness upon this occasion highly reprehensible ; it is quite evident I have made a conquest of Mr. Pratt, and who can tell it might not prove a most desirable match ! I call him Mr. Pratt, but I am by no means certain he is only an Esquire—he may be a Baronet, or even a Lord ; such people, we all know, do sometimes travel by stage coaches ; and I am sure he is handsome and genteel enough for any thing. So, I really felt quite vexed with my Aunt for treating him in such a manner, but you know she has some strange notions about marriage ; I suppose because the grapes are sour.

“ Well, my dear Georgina, we arrived at length—and Pratt gave a last token of his admiration by affectionately squeezing my hand as he handed me into the hackney coach. But what do you think ? I was so overcome by agitation that though my shoe fell off, I never missed it, until we had gone ever so far ; and though we had the coach well searched, it was in vain : so, it must have dropped off as I was getting in. Perhaps Mr. Pratt has gained possession of it—if so, he will learn my name ; and as he must have heard the order to the coachman where to set us down, it is possible—just possible that,

“ In consequence of my loss
able to accompany my aunt,
after breakfast, went out on bus-
yours ; but, the owner of this h
to be a highly respectable pers
to her station in life, has sent
shoe warehouse, and in the af
wander forth.

“ Mrs. Phipson has just been
maker. I have got my walkin
Georgina ! I have heard somethin
head swim. In return for her civ
right to enter into conversation
judge of my astonishment when
is own aunt to the vile woman v
formerly devoted Slycer ! Mrs.
it seems, was a tea-dealer ; who
daughter thirty thousand pounds
of course the bait, by means of
that susceptible creature. They
in town. keep an elegant equipa

consternation I find there is a likelihood of our meeting; for they pay much attention to Mrs. Phipson, and come here frequently. What!—if we should be thrown together? How must I demean myself? of course with modest dignity, and gentle reserve; but it will not be easy. Oh Georgina! What a destiny is mine! Hark—a carriage drives up to the door and stops—if it should be them! Be still, my foolish fluttering heart. A loud knock—every instant of delay adds to my misery; I could scratch her eyes out. I can no longer endure this anxious suspense, and will try to find out who it is by looking from the window. Oh if it should be him! once my heart's master, and my truant love. If it should be Alfred—No, it is only my aunt Rocket in a hackney coach."

"How ridiculous Belinda is;" observed Charlotte, when she had read thus far.

"Yes; her heart reminds me of a tradesman's wares—at every body's service," replied Georgina.

"You don't suppose Belinda feels all this?"

"No, no; if she did she would be less frank about it."

“ You are well advised in this matter, I perceive,” said Charlotte archly.

Georgina answered, laughing, “ Indeed Charlotte, when Mr. D’Esterre was here, I was terribly afraid lest he should try to make me own my——sentiments.”

“ And did he?”

“ Oh no; he was much too considerate. It was so fortunate; I am sure I never could have told the truth.”

Charlotte thought it was not consideration only that withheld D’Esterre.

“ What makes Belinda choose you as her correspondent?”

“ Indeed, I don’t know; one of her fancies, I suppose.”

“ Very likely she thought we should all laugh at her: and perhaps she is right; near relations are not always the most lenient judges.”

"There is a great deal more," observed Georgina.

"So I perceive; and why, I wonder," said Charlotte, recurring to the letter, "why does my sister speak of that stranger in such familiar terms?"

"I conclude she thinks it more romantic; *Mr.* sounds very common-place."

Charlotte read on. The next paragraph was from Miss Rocket.

"MY DEAR GEORGINA,

"I add a few hasty lines to Belinda's letter to tell you that you must give up all idea of employing Madame Regnier; for the present, at least; when you are married to Mr. D'Esterre, if he chooses you to spend a fortune in gowns or bonnets, it will be all very well; in the meantime we must be satisfied with some more reasonable person; her extravagance puts her out of the question. I did not waste much time with Madame Regnier, for, finding she had the assurance to ask six guineas for a hat you might have got at

Marston for thirty shillings; and that every thing was proportionably extravagant, I speedily bade her good morning, and desired the coachman to set me down at another milliner's in Bury-street, St. James's, whose name I learnt from a fellow-passenger on our road to town. Here my luck was no better: so I determined to dismiss the coach and try my chance on foot. And very fortunate it was I made this resolution; for, after walking about, I know not how long, and making more than one attempt, quite as unsuccessful as the former, I, at length, found what, I think, will answer extremely well. It was in a street near some square; Leicester, I think; but I am not quite certain. However, that is of no consequence. I have chosen two bonnets and a cap; for married women, it seems, often wear caps in the morning. As for your dresses—the best plan will be to buy the silk here (I dare say I shall be able to pick it up cheap), and you can have them made up at Atherley. The bonnets are, a white satin, to be worn on a particular occasion; this you must consider as my present; and a dark velvet for every day wear.

“ We have had a visiter, a gentleman who travelled part of the way with us, and did not

take my fancy at all ; but Belinda thinks him vastly genteel, and has contrived to make an engagement for the Theatre this evening. I would rather sit quietly at home, for I am very stiff with taking so much exercise, and care no more for plays than a cow would for a riding-habit ; but my niece is wild about it ; and I can only hope, Mr. Pratt, for that is her new admirer's name, will put the Captain out of her foolish head. By the way, talking of a riding habit, I was vexed to hear from Charlotte, the morning we left home, that Mr. D'Esterre had written, he was purchasing a horse for you. A riding dress will cost a mint of money : to say nothing of the danger to a young woman who has never been on horseback in her life, and riding with none but a giddy young man to take care of her. I once had a very serious fall myself. Mr. Pratt says he can get a frank ; so this will not go untill to-morrow. The milliner has sent home your things, and very pretty they are. I find, from her card, that her address is, Miss Snipwell, Cranbourne Alley. I am so much pleased with her civility and diligence that I have ordered a bonnet for myself and each of the girls ; all to be worn on the same occasion as your white satin ; theirs blue, or pink, according to their

different complexions; mine, an apple green with lilac ribbon and flowers. I hope my nieces treat Miss Flagge with due attention. Love to your Father and all friends.

“ Yours affectionately,

“ REBECCA ROCKET.”

“ MY DEAREST GEORGINA, , Friday.

“ I must add a postscript to my other lengthy dispatch, for my heart burns to communicate the tidings of its happiness to your kindred spirit. My beloved friend, I was right in my suspicions that the dear unknown would avail himself of the fortunate accident which put him in possession of my name. He called yesterday; and in his enchanting society, the hours flew on rosy pinions. In the evening he returned, in order to escort us to the Theatre; and how shall I describe the ecstasy of my feelings, or the tumultuous throbbing of my heart, as in a place where all conjoins to captivate the senses, I sat, wrapt in a * whirlwind of delight; my eyes fixed, apparently upon the gorgeous pageant, my ear bent,

* “ Whirlwind of delight.”—Like other persons fond of hyperbolical expressions, Belinda was not always happy in her choice of words.

to catch the syren strains poured forth; but in reality, both sight and hearing, in fact, all my soul, was given to him who sat beside me. Georgina, description fails! Your fancy must depict the scene. One thing is evident, Gustavus (that is his name) adores me. And I return his love a thousand fold. How will it all end? He loves me, and I him—but his family may raise objections. They are evidently high people; he promised us to get a frank from his uncle, who must be a member of parliament, if not, a Peer—perhaps, Lord Camden; for, I find, from the Peerage, that Pratt is the family name of that noble house. My brain whirls with delight and ecstasy. Farewell, my sweet, my bosom friend. All happiness be thine.

“BELINDA.”

“P.S. I forgot to mention that Gustavus supped with us; our hostess having, with her characteristic consideration, provided some most tempting oysters, and bottled porter. It does not sound altogether romantic; but oysters and porter are, I find, the supper all fashionable people take after the Theatre. You may be sure, however, I did not touch the latter until he was gone; and limited myself to half a dozen oysters, although I could have eaten twice as many.”

letter.

“ I am sure, I hope that, a
tions, my aunt will get you
wear. Mr. D'Esterre appear
who would choose his wife to l

“ His own taste is so go
think him very superior, Chai
Georgina ; anxious, as every
her lover praised.

“ Yes, Mr. D'Esterre dresse
like a gentleman ; and, I dare
good, or he would not have ch
don't be affronted, Georgy,
ecstacies about him. You
does not see Mr. D'Esterre
and perhaps if he had conf

been of your opinion, and looked upon him as a piece of masculine perfection."

On reading this epistle, it certainly did occur to Georgina that millinery fabricated in Cranbourne Alley would not be quite the thing; she was well pleased, therefore, by the receipt of a second communication from Miss Rocket, dated a few days after the foregoing.

"MY DEAR GEORGINA,

"I find that Cranbourne Alley is not considered altogether genteel, so I am really sorry I ordered your millinery thence; but, as the mistake was mine, so shall the loss be. I have since heard of a person living in Mortimer-street, Cavendish-square, who is not expensive, and makes very pretty things; I shall order yours from her. Belinda, I am sorry to say, has met with an old school-fellow, a Mrs. Griffiths, who is going with her husband to spend a few weeks at Boulogne, and has persuaded my niece to accompany them. I set my face decidedly against this absurd expedition, but to no purpose. Bell sailed yesterday, and how or when she will

get back, I really cannot say. I shall be kept here some little time longer ; and, if she be not returned at the time I am at liberty, I shall certainly not wait for her. One thing, in a measure, reconciles me to the expedition ; and that is, it will take her out of Mr. Pratt's way — a most vulgar, disagreeable person is that young man ; and so forward and presuming, I find it quite impossible to keep him in his proper place. What his profession is, I really can't divine ; Bell says he is a banker, because he does business somewhere in the city ; but I have looked through all the list of banking-houses, and see no such name. I wish with all my heart some man of common sense would take a fancy to her ; and as, in matrimony, people often choose their opposites, perhaps one day I shall see her married to a 'man with brains. Good bye. I am glad to hear you are all going on so well. Love to Miss Flagge, your father, and the girls.

“ Ever your affectionate,

Monday.

“ REBECCA ROCKET.”

“ You are becoming an important person, Georgina. Really, quite an extensive correspondence,” said Major Berrington, one morn-

ing, as a letter, bearing a foreign postmark, was put into his daughter's hands.

"*You* do not write so much as formerly, papa," replied Georgina, in a tone between enquiry and remark.

"No. I have been enabled to make arrangements which, for the present, give me some little respite."

What those arrangements were, Major Berrington did not think proper to inform Georgina. Had he done so, she would not, probably, have understood them; for, notwithstanding all our quickness of perception, a gift we frequently possess in a more eminent degree than men—whenever business is concerned, it may not be denied we are uncommonly obtuse. Belinda's letter was much more in Georgina's way.

Boulogne Sur Mer.

"I write to you from France—fair, lilled, beauteous France—is it not enchanting, rapturous,

my Georgina? But to explain my coming—to dissipate the astonishment my lovely cousin feels at hearing of my journey. You remember my dearest friend and school companion, Eugenia Hopkins? She, who was everything to me, until her marriage rent the bond, and we were parted—but not for ever. After years of separation, painful to us both, we met again on Ludgate Hill, whither my aunt had gone on your account, in search of bargains. By the way, why do you limit yourself so closely? are you not aware that a man becomes liable for his wife's debts? if I were in your place, I should buy everything I fancied, and let Mr. D'Esterre settle the bills at some future opportunity. But to return to my Eugenia; we met once more, I say, and with reciprocal delight. But alas! our pleasure seemed likely to be short-lived: Eugenia and her husband were engaged to spend the Christmas at Boulogne; and I, you know, was in attendance upon my aunt. But, unable to bear the torture of another separation, we at length agreed I should accompany them; and, in spite of a great deal of vexatious opposition, here I am.

“I wish I could describe the passage—tell you of the variety of interesting objects we passed, in steaming down the river. I intended to have done so, to

have taken notes, and provided myself with tablets for that purpose. But on first setting out, the weather was against us; a thick fog enveloped all; and I really was so cold and miserable, I could not have made my pencil mark had I seen every wonder of the world. But, to say the truth, I saw nothing but dirty vessels and muddy water. Once fairly at sea, the weather cleared; and with ecstatic pleasure did I stand and watch our vessel's pathway through the azure waters. I even composed some lines on the occasion: but alas, alas, I very soon grew faint and ill. I could neither see, hear, nor understand; in short, was sea-sick, and obliged to go below, where I remained until we reached Boulogne. But the worst of my misfortunes was that, whilst I lay in a state of almost insensibility, some one applied a vinnigrette, and burnt my nose most terribly. I suppose the office was well meant; but I, really, wish it had been omitted. We had little trouble on landing; we were most kindly received, and two days after our arrival I was as well as ever, excepting my poor nose.

"I have now been here a fortnight—and to say the time has been spent delightfully would be but faint praise. Balls, every evening—walks and sight-seeing by day. Oh! it is beyond description;

and I am quite convinced there is no society to equal that we meet with on the continent ; nor can I any longer wonder that our nobility and wealthy men are all so fond of living out of England. I cannot pourtray all the wonders of this place—its ramparts, churches, harbour—one day you will see them all. Yes, Georgina ; you will, surely, one day travel ; and then, you will see Boulogne !!

“ One circumstance has greatly enhanced my enjoyment. On the fourth day after our arrival, we were standing on the pier, watching the arrival of an English steamer ; when, judge of my enchantment on discovering that Gustavus was on board ! I will not say, I was taken by surprise ; for, as I told him of my intended trip, I thought it very likely the dear youth might follow. Eugenia, all kindness and consideration, gave him, for my sake, a most cordial welcome ; and we have since been constantly together, without the drawback of my Aunt's ill-natured, envious strictures. But all happiness must have an end. She has written to insist on my immediate return ; and, as some friends of Eugenia's are on the wing for England, I must obey her mandate. Gustavus, too, is going, which reconciles me to my lot. I must make one remark on the much vaunted wit and *politesse* of the French

people. I have not found the shop-keepers, by any means, so civil and intelligent as I expected. Indeed, I think them very stupid: they do not even understand their own language, and when I address them in French, stand staring as if they had never heard such words before; or, in English, ask me what it is I want. Now, surely, this is being very dull; for at Miss Braceback's, I was always thought to speak French with remarkable precision. But it arises, no doubt, as Gustavus says, from the fact that the natives here speak only *patois*, while my French is Parisian. He has the most exquisite taste in jewellery; on my return, should you observe a delicate gold chain encircling my neck, you must not seek to know what it suspends.

“ Farewell,

“ Think often of your most affectionate

“ BELINDA.

CHAPTER XV.

CHARLOTTE ARNOLD's doubts, as to the issue of her Aunt's exertions, proved themselves perfectly correct—Rebecca did her best, but dress was not Rebecca's forte. Georgina, however, felt this little *contretems* less than many persons of her age and circumstances would have done. She had never been accustomed to consider dress a matter of importance ; and, excepting to regret she had been unable to follow Mr. D'Esterre's wishes, thought little on the subject,

nor, when Miss Rocket proudly exhibited the fruit of her good natured labours, and showy bonnets, or flimsy silks were held up for Georgina's admiration, although her better taste condemned the tawdry articles, would she, for the world, have suffered her opinion to transpire; or hurt, by word or look, the feelings of her kind, well-meaning relative.

The day preceding that on which Georgina should become a Bride, she received a letter from her sister, couched in the fondest terms; again repeating Janet's wishes for the happiness of the two beings whose fates were henceforth to be linked in one, and still expressing her deep regret at the impossibility of her witnessing their union. The letter concluded by begging Georgina's acceptance of some ornaments, which Miss Irving described as trifling, but which, to her sister's unpractised notions, seemed perfectly magnificent; and she was

pained by observing that Perceval (who had arrived the night before), far from joining in her praises of Janet's taste and affection, smiled satirically as she read the letter: and, in place of admiring, criticised the trinkets. Perceval knew well enough the ornaments were such as Janet would not herself have worn, and he doubted the real value of her affectionate expressions.

"Janet was right," thought Georgina, while she placed her ill appreciated treasures on her dressing table. "Mr. D'Esterre is difficult to please, satirical, ill-natured—" and a sort of shrinking feeling came upon her, as, in imagination, she beheld herself for ever subject to the strictures of so severe a judge.

But it soon passed away. When they met again, she was prepared for walking.

"Where are you going this miserable day?" he enquired in a tone of good-natured surprise.

“ Into the village. I have a few farewell calls to make.”

“ Take me with you,” said Perceval, placing her arm beneath his; but, at the same time, marvelling that so young a girl should walk alone.

Notwithstanding the inclement weather, every body was sufficiently accommodating to be from home, excepting one old decrepit creature, who had long been Georgina’s favourite pensioner. Here they staid some little time: and Perceval spoke and looked so kindly, and finally bestowed so handsome a donation on the miserable being, that Georgina quite forgot his want of sympathy respecting Janet—and again did he become all that was good and estimable.

When they returned home, Georgina found Maurice Arnold sitting with her father.

“ Oh Maurice,” she cried, throwing off her bonnet as she hurried forward, “ dear Maurice,

how happy I am to see you. But no—I have half a mind to be offended. You have been such an absentee of late, that, indeed you do not deserve a welcome.”

“My time,” said Maurice hesitatingly, “has been much taken up——”

“And even now,” interrupted Major Berrington, “Maurice is come to say we must not expect to see him to-morrow.”

“You will not be here to-morrow? You will not be present at my marriage?” said Georgina, half reproachfully.

“I cannot, dearest Georgy, It will not be possible. Accept, instead, my best, my fondest wishes for your welfare—this trifle, too, perhaps you will receive in memory of old times. Wear it, dear Georgy; and when you chance to cast your eye upon the dial-plate, think of the friends you leave at Atherley.” He put into her hand a very beautiful gold repeater, with corresponding chain and seals.

"Oh Maurice, surely you do not think I need so costly a remembrancer?"

"Bless you, Georgina, bless you, my own sweet girl. May every happiness be yours—above all may he you love prove worthy of you," said Maurice in a tone of the profoundest feeling—then, parting back the glossy clustering ringlets, he gently kissed her fair young forehead, and in an instant he was gone.

Georgina burst into tears: this was her first family farewell, and not till now had she, in any measure, realised the parting from all she had hitherto most loved, which her marriage must entail. Up to this moment, it had not occurred to her that, in forming an entirely new tie, old ones must be weakened, if not utterly dissolved. Her tears were quickly wiped away, for she dreaded to decrease the depression Major Berrington naturally felt at their approaching separation; but she remained

silent and dejected, during the remainder of that day.

On his side, Perceval was far from being perfectly at ease: he had remained without, to give some instructions to his valet; opened the door of the sitting-room, just in time to witness Maurice's farewell and Georgina's agitation, and forthwith a most unpleasant surmise darted into his mind. At Eastbeach, he had heard the report of Georgina's engagement; and though Lady Kingsbury's denial, together with Major Berrington's subsequent assurance that his daughter's inclinations were altogether free, had, for the time, carried their full weight, he could not now avoid suspecting that the rumour had been well grounded, and that the poor, but preferred, relative had been sacrificed to the more wealthy suitor.

The evening passed heavily.

"Georgina," said her father, when she rose.

to bid him good night, "let me hear my old favourite ballad once more. It may be long before you sing to me again, my child; and let it be without accompaniment."

In compliance with this request, Georgina sang the same sweet simple air that had formerly attracted Perceval's attention, and laid the basis of their present intimacy. At first, her voice was tremulous, but, gaining strength as she proceeded, swelled into rich and powerful melody. An artist would have vainly sought a fairer model than Georgina Berrington, as, with eyes partially up-raised, her delicately rounded cheek tinged with a brilliant red, and gentle heaving of her snowy bosom, she breathed the last few notes of that old, simple air. A painter would, I say, have joyfully transferred that lovely image to his canvass; and Perceval, who looked on all with something of an artist's eye, was not insensible

to his betrothed's attractions; yet was the look he cast upon her one which spoke admiration, rather than any warmer feeling. Georgina withdrew.

"D'Esterre," said Major Berrington, after a minute's silence, "my daughter is a lovely creature, but she is something more than beautiful. She is amiable, pure, virtuous; the picture is not unworthy of its frame, the jewel of its setting. I can give Georgina little or nothing; yet, in bestowing her on you, I feel I am parting with a treasure beyond price; she is a being with all a woman's excellencies, and few, if any, of her faults. Prove yourself worthy of her; treat her with affection, for hitherto she has known unkindness only by its name. Oh! as you hope yourself, one day, to be a father, heed now a father's charge; deal gently with my child: and in the splendid home to which you bear her, never, I enjoin you,

give her one moment's reason to regret the one she leaves."

There was a great deal in this speech that jarred on Perceval's feelings; he thought the obligation lay on his side, not on Georgina's; and he was annoyed at the mistrust implied by Major Berrington's appeal. Casting therefore a look of contempt round the apartment so small, and meanly furnished, he answered, almost sneeringly,

"I trust Miss Berrington will see no cause to quarrel with her future home—I hope she will find it possible to be happy at Ringland." Having thus said, D'Esterre stalked out of the room, with an air of haughtiness his bearing did not usually display; while Major Berrington remained buried in reflections, which, in a man of more energetic character, had perhaps, even then, issued in the event so ardently desired by Janet—a rupture of the engagement.

It was already dusk, when Maurice returned to Marston: and, hastily dismounting from his steed, without bestowing the accustomed caress, he entered the room which served him as his study; and, throwing himself into a chair, fell into a painful reverie, or rather, I should say, continued to indulge the same unhappy train of thoughts that had possessed his mind since leaving Atherley.

For years, had Maurice Arnold loved his cousin. Long, long ago, when, as a soft and artless child, she would come nestling to his side—or climb upon his knee, that she might better tell him all her joys and sorrows, Maurice had loved her. She was a girl; full of frank gaiety, of guileless love, winning all hearts by her sweet gentleness; and still he loved her. And now, when each rich charm of dawning womanhood was flung around her, still Maurice loved her—fondly, and truly

loved. It was a first and only love ; so deeply grafted on his nature that it became himself ; a strong abiding feeling, which, though time might weaken, death only could efface.

In the many struggles of a most arduous profession, in the sad hours of heart-sick despondency to which his numerous disappointments had given birth, she had been his polar star—the haven where his wishes ever rested—the anchor where his fainting hope had leant and gathered energy—the single sun-beam of his dark and wintry day.

'Twas true, her feelings did not correspond with his.—Maurice knew they did not ; but though this knowledge mortified him, it did not damp his expectations, nor cloud his future hopes. Hitherto, her youth, together with his inability to maintain a wife, had kept him silent ; but he yet believed that when the chilling mists of poverty were passed away, and honour would

no longer seal his lips, it could not be that one so gentle and affectionate would still remain insensible to his unswerving love. Animated by this bright, this cheering prospect, for the last two years, especially, Maurice had toiled with unremitting zeal:—early and late—by night, by day, he laboured on; careless of fatigue; indifferent to discomfort—regardless, fatally regardless, of the rapid inroads a fearful malady was making in a constitution always fragile. And what was the result of all this self-denial, this labour—study—zeal? A stranger cast his roving fancy on the sweet flower he had so tenderly watched over; and it must grace that stranger's bosom!—For he was wealthy—Maurice Arnold poor!

A few short hours, and Georgina, *his* Georgina, she whose bright form had been his thought by day, his dream by night, the idol of his hope, the cherished treasure of his inmost soul—

would be for ever lost to him. Oh! it was agony to think—and yet, no shade of bitterness towards her, no envious feeling towards his successful rival, nor even a repining murmur against the poverty that had proved the blight of his own happiness mingled with Maurice's reflections. He sought to bear his disappointment as a Christian man: and with a groan that spoke his tortured soul, there rose a fervent supplication, that a trial needful, or it would never have been awarded, might not be sent in vain!

CHAPTER

"HAPPY is the bride that t
If there be truth in this ol
must be happy ; for a still a
less sky, and brilliant sunsl
her bridal morn ; while fro
tree, even each tiny blade
diamonds, rubies, sapphires
dour. All was bright and
Georgina cast a tearful glan

fancied it never had seemed thus beautiful before. And she must leave it—bid farewell to home, indulgent relatives, and early friends—must enter upon fresh scenes—must mix with strangers—and contract new ties!

For one so young and inexperienced, it was a painful thought; and, while Georgina trembled at the chilling prospect, she remembered, almost with a shudder, that he, upon whose arm she must henceforward lean—who was to be her guide, protector, all in all—was but a stranger, too. Her heart was heavy; and it needed much encouragement from Charlotte Arnold, who came to assist in the great business of the bride's toilet, and no little effort on her own part, to drive her tears away.

When the last curl had been arranged, the last fold given to the dress, Rebecca came into the room; and, after turning Georgina round and round, said, as she threw a really pretty shawl across her shoulders,

“Well, Georgy, you look very pretty, very pretty indeed; I dare say Mr. D’Esterre will think so. Now, there’s my last present, and here’s my last piece of advice. I dare say one will be more welcome than the other; but that’s no matter, it’s my duty to say what I believe to be right, so I now tell you there are two or three things you must be careful about. Charlotte, we want a pin here; yes, that will do now. What was I saying? Oh—in the first place, don’t let Mr. D’Esterre think you over fond of him; it’s bad policy—and love makes a woman ridiculous. Besides, people never care for what they can get without difficulty; and if Mr. D’Esterre knows how much you care for him, the odds are that he will take less pains about pleasing you. In the next place, I wish you to make him understand that though you are ready to yield him all due and proper obedience as a wife should do (you

know, my dear, it is written, 'wives obey your husbands'), yet that you can have a will of your own: for men—selfish creatures, are apt to take advantage of a woman if they think she hasn't spirit enough to stand up for herself, sometimes. But, above all, don't let his family trample upon you. You are going among strangers, who may, or may not, receive you kindly. I hope and believe they will. But, at any rate, you are far more likely to ensure the esteem, respect, aye, and the affection of your husband's relations, by shewing them that you entertain a proper sense of your own value. Modesty and humility are all very well in their way; but, say I, 'Think a good deal of yourself, and other people will do the same.' And, though I wouldn't, on any account, you should become habitually selfish; yet, as people commonly take advantage of a young, yielding disposition, it may not be amiss you should

Now, God bless you, my dear
old friends; and always recollect
your father has been to you

How far Rebecca's advice
boots not to enquire; it is
timed, since it accorded
Georgina's previous train
lent burst of grief was the
was only by dint of repeated
volatile and water she became
posed to leave her room.

"There now," thought
Berrington led his daughter
"there now, what with George
Major Berrington's impetuosity
always in such a hurry—ne

forgotten to speak my mind about Miss Irving."

Rebecca's exhortation, long as it was, had been curtailed. It had been her full intention to warn her young relative against admitting Janet too frequently a visiter beneath her roof.

"It's always a foolish plan," argued the shrewd Miss Rocket, "and here particularly so: for, as Mr. D'Esterre thought proper to flirt with Janet once, when he's got tired of Georgina, he may do the same again. Poor Georgy! I hope she'll be happy; but it really is a great risk. Certainly women are very badly off; for, if a girl doesn't happen to have a fortune of her own, she must either marry or be starved."

No brilliant train of equipages was in attendance to convey the bridal party from their respective homes to church. Two glass coaches and a fly, together with the clergyman's old-

carriage.

Amongst all the events
ing epochs of our life, n
much bustle and excitem
Death is too awful to be
these days of over-populati
family is rarely a subject
But let notice of an expect
mated, and forthwith the w
qui vive. And no person
into the delight of the occa
maiden branches of the fa
they think matrimony is in
having once made its app
they stand a chance of taki

But however exhilarating

even to sadness ; the one in question was peculiarly so ; and, when Georgina, pale as the monumental stone near which she stood, and Perceval, with easy, manly grace, pronounced those awful words that linked them irrevocably together, tears of real sorrow, for they sprang from separating hearts, moistened the eyes of many of the spectators.

But it is over—the bells ring out a merry peal, Georgina has received her father's last embrace and parting blessing, friendly congratulations have been spoken, kind wishes breathed by those who stand within the church, and the more humble group, who line each side of the pathway, waiting impatiently to see “their dear young lady get into her own new carriage.” Perceval has handed in his bride, has taken his seat beside her, the drivers crack their whips, the horses eagerly spring forward, and they are off.

raised his eyes toward
hastily turned round,
wooden palings, remain
as if incapable of movin
by her tears, saw neither
of withering agony tha
as he recognised the wa
tokens that the sacrific
had been completed. F
it all—and he hastily
window. Was it comp
rival, or was it jealousy
I fear the latter: for I
Georgina's inordinate gr
deeper source than the
every girl must feel or

a mind by nature prone to jealous feelings; as the day wore on, Georgina recovered her tranquillity, and D'Esterre forgot his transient suspicions.

For many reasons it had been arranged that the wedding breakfast should take place at Vine Cottage, under the superintendence of Miss Rocket: and thither, urged by Rebecca's hospitable kindness, Major Berrington proceeded with the other guests. He remained but a short time; it was too gay a scene for one like him; and, as he silently withdrew, no one followed; for they felt that to sorrow, such as his, solitude and self-communion would prove the most effectual balm. Later in the day, Mr. Beachcroft called at the Grange, and, softly entering the parlour, found Major Berrington seated in his accustomed chair, an open Bible lay before him, whose blistered pages shewed how fast and thick the bitter drops had

fallen. Ashamed of this evidence of weakness, he closed the book.

“Nay,” said the kind-hearted Rector, “do not let me interrupt you. You feel your daughter’s loss, as every parent must; and you do well and wisely thus to seek comfort where no one ever sought in vain. He, who compassionated a fainting multitude—who sorrowed for the friend he loved—wept over the rebellious city of his birth—whose life was one long act of love to man—still in his human nature, touched with a sense of our infirmities, and sympathising with our griefs, bids us in all our trials turn to Him for strength and consolation. But, my dear friend,” continued Mr. Beachcroft, after a brief pause and silent prayer, “you must not give too much rein to sorrow. Remember, that, in this instance, your grief is almost purely selfish.”

“It is, however, natural. Is it not a heart-

breaking thing to part with such a child as my Georgina?"

"Yes; your feelings are natural—perfectly natural; but they are not the less selfish for that: selfishness, in fact, is part of our nature—it meets us every-where; joy, sorrow, duty—all are tainted with self."

"And yet," replied Major Berrington, with a faltering voice, "it is not only on my own account I grieve: I cannot see my daughter's marriage in the same favourable point of view in which it appears to others, less anxious, and, therefore, less clear-sighted than I am."

Mr. Beachcroft looked inquiringly.

"Georgina," continued Major Berrington, in reply, "has made, what is called, a great match, and my vanity might be gratified, my pride elated, by my child's aggrandisement, could I but forget that unequal marriages are rarely happy."

marries very much beneath
servant, or a peasant girl,
subscribe to that opinion
this case, the difference
few thousand pounds more
so of higher birth, I really
union should prove otherwise

“Nor should I, if my
Maurice Arnold. But then
of heart about Mr. D’E
militate against my poor child

“Till that is proved, I
to entertain the suspicion
it may lead you to condemn
next, cause you to imagine
instances, where, in reality,

Father; and rest assured that He, who doeth all things well, will appoint to her the lot best suited to her highest welfare. And should that portion bear a darker hue; should Georgina's path in life be not exactly what you would have chosen for her; still, still remember that a full cup of earthly blessings is seldom meted out to those whom God most loves and cherishes; whose own, peculiar people are emphatically called 'Poor and afflicted.' Never, I pray you, let it escape your mind that it is not through joy, but sorrow — much tribulation, that we enter Heaven. And, therefore, do not suffer yourself to harbour gloomy thoughts: recollect that, as a course of uninterrupted prosperity hardens the heart, so the constant anxiety incident on poverty tends to corrode it. Georgina will, at any rate, be spared the last. But it is growing late: I shall be expected at home. Would nothing tempt you out this afternoon? We are quite alone, and

tation; and the worthy c
taking his departure, he
his own reflections: ar
were; for, notwithstandi
guine temper, the anxie
but perceive much caus
daughter's happiness, th
who, whatever might ha
for seeking the connexion
himself an exceedingly
More than once did M
tempted to regret that
marriage to take place.]
and put an end to the en
have been the consequence
her future fate? A life

scarcely less empty than a dream. Yes, it was better as it was; the bitterness of want she would, at any rate, escape; and surely Perceval must learn to love and estimate a creature so gentle and attractive—so ready to love him.

Ere very long, he was joined by Charlotte Arnold, who came to dine and spend the evening at the Grange.

“You are a dear good girl,” said he, as they took their seats at the cheerless dinner table. “There are not many of your age who would thus leave a gay party for the society of a dispirited invalid.”

“I mean to do it frequently; I have promised Georgina that you shall never feel her loss.”

Major Berrington sighed; he loved Charlotte, he could appreciate all her excellences, he knew she would fulfil her promise; still, who could be to him what his own child had been?

CHAPTER X

AT Vine Cottage, meanwhile, the party was in the height of hearted merriment. Rebecca was at any but the bright side, with her usual gaiety. The Miss Arnolds, with whom she was very intimate, were very unusual, sought pleasures to the utmost, and the party had been concluded for a portion of the company yet.

That morning, on leaving the church, after the conclusion of the marriage ceremony, some little delay had occurred in regaining the carriages; and, as the wedding party stood in detached groups, a young man, apparently three or four-and-twenty years of age, dark, tall, and rather stoutly built, dressed in a very *outré* style of fancied fashion—not absolutely ill-looking, but most vulgarly coxcombical, walked up to the spot where some of the Miss Arnolds, in blue and pink bonnets, were standing together. A cry of delighted surprise, on the part of Belinda, was the result of his appearance.

“Mr. Pratt!” almost screamed the enchanted damsel, “is it possible I behold you?”

“Even so,” he answered.

“And what brings you to Atherley?”

“A loving disposition, fairest lady,” replied the swain, laying his hand theatrically on his heart.

on love."

"Who can that be?" said Rocket, who turned round and recognised her old acquaintance with a bow and look which less determined person, and sensitive. But Mr. Gustav, a modest young gentleman, was affronted; all Miss Rocket's produced but the effect of to rate his manner, and lower to which he informed the entire though business had been to of his appearance in that was the real attraction.

An invitation to the

Charlotte's gravity, and Rebecca's frowns, Mr. Gustavus Pratt was quite the *beau* of the afternoon; all the other gentlemen were completely distanced, or eclipsed by him. As might be expected, both bride and bridegroom were severely canvassed.

"Don't you think it a great pity Mrs. D'Esterre cried so much this morning? do brides always cry?" enquired Miss Lucas, a young lady of no superior understanding—and one of Belinda's occasional favourites.

"*Bridesmaids* do," answered Mr. Pratt. Then added, looking at Belinda, "because their turn is not yet come."

"Have done, you saucy creature," cried she; trying hard to conjure up a blush.

"I wouldn't be married for the whole world," observed Miss Lucas, "I love my liberty too well."

"And so do I," rejoined Belinda, casting down her eyes.

who can afford to marry ;
nor, indeed, many girls
have beauty enough to make
of fortune ;" said Miss Reade,
frightening off Mr. Pratt.

" Yes," said Miss Lucas,
D'Esterre very handsome,
didn't look well this morning,
pity she *would* cry so much,
crying makes the eyes red,
unbecoming."

" All violent emotions
replied Gustavus. " Pride
anger swells the lip, tears
and fear takes the hair out of
the head."

" What does that mean ?"

“ Love makes a woman lovely, to be sure.”

“ How can you talk so? I declare I will not listen to you any longer. I shall go and watch the sun-set from my favourite window.”

“ Happy window!” murmured Gustavus, “ to be so distinguished. But, suffer me to follow you.”

“ No, no, you shan’t indeed. The moon will speedily be rising, and I always choose to gaze upon her chastened splendours, pensive and alone. Gustavus, do you love the moon?”

“ Far above every object upon earth but one.”

“ I did not know before, the moon was in the habit of coming down upon the earth,” testily remarked Miss Rocket. Then, as if the case was hopeless, turned to another guest.

Belinda placed herself in the window, while Mr. Pratt remained standing near Miss Lucas.

“ Charming house, this, ma’am,” said he.

The lady did not contradict him; indeed, she could not but agree.

husband's death. She g
Mr. Arnold resided at the
("A clergyman;" thou
money then, I fear.")

"Is it long since that g

"Yes; many years.
long survive him."

"She was, I believe, a
least, I think I have heard
by way of feeler.

"Not much; I believe
pounds."

"Oh—I was led to tl
more, by a remark I once
of the young ladies, I for
reported to be an heiress."

had he any ground for the assertion, excepting a sort of boast, Belinda had one day made, that she was better off than either of her sisters.

“An heiress!” said Miss Lucas, laughing. “Oh dear no; by no means. They have, of course, their mother’s fortune in addition to whatever Mr. Arnold may have left; but that could not be much; he only had the living for a short time. Miss Rocket, too, will probably leave whatever she may have between her nieces; and one of them, Belinda, the young lady who was here just now, is god-child to two old ladies in this neighbourhood, one of whom, dying last year, left her one thousand pounds, and it is supposed the other will do the same. But there is nothing like fortune.”

“Mary, are you ready? I am going now,” said a little old lady, in a grey silk gown.

“Yes, mama, quite. Good afternoon.”

Mr. Pratt returned Miss Lucas’s parting

salutation; and, after casting up in his mind the probable amount of Belinda's wealth, present and future, he joined her in the window, and began expatiating on the delights of moonlight rambles, a subject into which his Dulcinea entered *con amore*.

Miss Flagge was, however, the only person who walked by moonlight that evening: she had lingered behind the other guests, and then engaged in a rather warm discussion with Rebecca, on their usual topic of dispute; a subject which arose, not unnaturally, out of the event they had met to celebrate. Notwithstanding Miss Rocket's delight and exultation at Georgina's happy prospects, she inveighed quite as much as formerly against marriage in the abstract; for Mr. Pratt's sudden appearance and bold bearing had greatly excited her indignation, and she argued so long and earnestly that the village clock struck seven

as Theresa, cloaked and galoched, shivering with cold and almost shrunk up into nothing, stood waiting at the private door of Mrs. Slopewell's dwelling, until the servant girl judged it convenient to hear the small, tinkling bell her frozen fingers scarcely found energy to pull. And when she entered her little sitting room, the sharp, cold moonbeams fell in a narrow stream of light on the tawdry carpet, giving an air of chill discomfort, that a smoking, recently kindled, and but scantily supplied fire tended rather to increase.

She hastily closed the window curtains (there were no shutters), and having, in the true spirit of economy, exchanged her lilac silk dress and bonnet for a dark merino gown and net cap, endeavoured to infuse some warmth into her frame, by dint of that (to the poor) almost elixir of life—Tea. And while she sat before the little tea-tray, trying to make herself

she had hitherto used, and it was not surely very strange that her active imagination should dwell between her loneliness and the luxury and every other circumstance which Georgina was at that time surrounded. And then, thrown upon a humbler theme, to the Parkins—a brewer in the neighbourhood who some years previous to this, by his charms, had made an offer of his heart. But being guilty of being a clumsy person, a brown study, which, however lucrative, and quite genteel, proved unsuccessful. He had married shortly :

with gardens, green-house, hot-house—bearing the name of Shrubbery Hall, as if there had never before been a house surrounded with ever-greens, lilacs and laburnums. More than once also, as Theresa, weary and on foot, plodded along the turnpike-road, she had been all but mud-bespattered from the wheels of the flashy light green chariot, in which Mrs. Parkins was wont to take the air.

Perhaps unfortunately for herself, Theresa had been educated above her sphere in life, and hitherto, the refinement of feeling, education usually bestows, had rendered her tolerably indifferent to the glories she had forfeited; or, if a spirit of regret did sometimes rise, the recollection of Mr. Parkins's appearance, his loud voice, and coarse, boisterous manners, speedily turned the scale. But it was no longer so; she was so *very* cold—so thoroughly uncomfortable, that she most heartily wished it

Hall.

It is a very great mistake suffering penury entails, simply orders. Major Berrington, paid precious treasure in defiance of command—Maurice Arnold, borne with disappointment and disobliged to struggle on—even T. into the surrender of her fine felt all the stings and bitterness quite as acutely as does the who may sometimes, perchance, to bed. And perhaps more; trials of the heart and feeling bodily privation.

JANET

OR

GLANCES AT HUMAN NATURE.

THE SECOND OF
A SERIES OF TALES ON THE PASSIONS:

BY
THE AUTHOR OF "MISREPRESENTATION."

———And had she then no virtue,
Was she not wise, and chaste, and true?

———Oh no; envy had tainted all:
Like the foul worm that crawls and leaves it soil and noisomeness,
Marring the wholesome fruit.

OLD PLAY.

All Tales should have a moral. A Tale without a moral is just as useless as an
unwashed house—a bankrupt's bond—an M. P.'s conscience—or a fine lady.
M.S.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

LONDON
SAUNDERS AND OTLEY, CONDUIT STREET
1839



JANET;
OR
GLANCES AT HUMAN NATURE.

CHAPTER I.

WHY are not happy marriages more frequent?—
One, who knew something of human nature—
of its dark shades, at least, would reply by
pointing to that species of conventional hy-
pocrisy modern society imposes on its members.
Nor is he altogether wrong—we are all Auto-
matons, and the springs which move us are
hidden, sometimes, from ourselves; how then
shall others penetrate our secret motives, or

under false impressions
nations there is frequent
affection. If there be
business (and, by the
gradient to wedded hap-
altogether) it is all on
marry the woman of his
but rarely do both consi-
girl, whilst still under p-
or accepts, not as her he-
dictate : and, in later da-
tress, she marries any one
in her buffettings about
the want of a protector
not moral fortitude to
being an old maid. An
pique—whim—to advan-

at the fickleness of man—it were more just, perhaps, did she suspect that she had never been beloved. And the indulgent husband, whose affection meets with no adequate return, may nearly always be assured that the jewel he vainly seeks to win has long ago been parted with.

To understand the reasons that swayed Mr. Perceval D'Esterre on this occasion, it will be expedient to give a few items of his previous history.

He was an only child : his father, the representative of a highly respectable family, which had resided at Ringland for about a century and a half ; his mother, Lady Gertrude Frampton, eldest sister of the Marquis of Cotswold. It was whispered this high - born dame would scarcely have bestowed herself upon a simple commoner, with but a moderate estate, had she not already reached the shady side of thirty, and consequently saw but little probability of another offer ; for, in those days, “elderly young

may be supposed she gave satisfaction to her Lord; for occurred within three years had taken place, he left the Lord Cotswold, sole guardian and trustees of the property.

The Marquis proved faithful being an excellent man of unlike the estate of many value, so that when Perceval rity, in addition to an augmented himself master of a ready money. Nor was this owed his noble relative. Lord widower, was extremely parsimonious and as it was not generally Cotswold property was strictly

tingency, Perceval's present importance derived considerable increase. He was now a rich man—hereafter, he would be more wealthy still.

On her side, Lady Gertrude had also done her duty, or, at any rate, what she considered such. She nursed her son carefully through all the disorders of infancy; separated him as much as possible from his less aristocratic relations; instilled into his mind the most exaggerated sense of his own importance; and, from an early age, taught him to consider the attainment of rank, wealth, and fashion, as the chief object of existence. What an education for a rational, immortal being!

Naturally, Perceval was by no means more unamiable or selfish than his neighbours; but how could one, who from his cradle had been led to think only of himself, be otherwise than indifferent to the feelings of those around him? nor might a mind, whose finer sympathies had remained uncultivated, be afterwards expected to shake off its early bias, and shape out for

itself a nobler course, or objects of ambition more exalted. Lady Gertrude wished to see her son a man of fashion; and, more dutiful than sons in general, he fully answered all his mother's rational desires. He became a man of fashion—not of fashionable vices, but of tastes and notions. That ambition which, if well directed, might have grasped distinction in the senate or at the bar, took a far meaner range. He sought to be the best dressed man of his acquaintance—to drive the best appointed equipage—give the best dinners—above all, keep the best company. And, by dint of spending three times the amount of his yearly income, he attained his honourable object; nay more than that—he became himself *the* fashion.

What is fashion?—A sort of epidemic mania, as capricious in its subjects as it is fleeting in its taste. Whizgigs were once the fashion—so was Brummel; shoe-making was considered a fit employment for delicate white hands; and Spanish patriotism was quite the rage: and the

more recent fancies of the fickle goddess have been neither more rational nor lasting. Well—Perceval became the fashion. For two years he occupied the point of highest eminence among the most exclusive persons, and enjoyed all the consequences of that distinction. He was, at once, petted by the young married ladies—admired by the unmarried—adulated by Chaperones—envied by some men—imitated by others.

But this halcyon state of things might not last long. Money was getting scarce, debt became inevitable—sundry exhortations from his lady mother followed, and a few trifling retrenchments were resolved on. From this time his glory faded—his star had reached its culminating point, and now began to wane : it was whispered that, far from being the wealthy person he had been imagined, Mr. D'Esterre was all but ruined ; and those who had before, eagerly, courted his society, now shrunk from his presence. Persons, whom the giddy voice of

fashion has raised above their due level, are usually especially tenacious of their ephemeral distinction. Such had been D'Esterre's case, and it was with infinite mortification he became aware of his declining popularity.

Then the Marquis died, and left no legacy of almost countless wealth. Perceval was not disappointed, for he had never expected any; but his creditors were, and became exceedingly annoying in their solicitations to have their "small accounts" discharged. The Cotswold title and property went to a remote branch of the family, who regarded Perceval merely as a distant connexion, and, far from evincing any wish to cultivate his acquaintance, gave him a cold and very general invitation to Hartingfield.

This was, perhaps, the unkindest cut of all; for with his deceased uncle vanished much of the borrowed distinction he had hitherto enjoyed; and Perceval, the fashionable—the dandified—the exclusive Perceval saw himself fast sinking to the level of a mere country gentleman.

But the case was not altogether hopeless ; a good marriage, that is to say, an alliance with a woman of rank and fortune, would at once rid him of his difficulties, and restore some degree of his former pre-eminence. The measure was resolved upon ; and he, who had formerly been so *volage* in his attachments as to obtain the *soubriquet* of *Papillon*, was henceforth to be considered a marrying man. It was, however, easier to make, than fulfil, this resolution. Mr. D'Esterre's bride, like Lady Kingsbury's house, must combine so many requisites, that such a being was not readily met with. High birth, beauty, accomplishments, and wealth, are rarely united in a single individual ; and when they are, the possessor of so many attractions usually aspires to something beyond a country gentleman. In spite, therefore, of his most laudable intention, notwithstanding the willingness with which his wishes would have been met, and perhaps fore-stalled, by many mamas and daughters, Perceval remained unmarried.

And yet there did exist, not many miles from Ringland either, precisely what he wanted—a lady, young, beautiful, rich, noble, and amiable, of course—all young ladies are amiable. The present Marquis of Cotswold had been twice married: his first lady, a woman of very considerable fortune, died while her three daughters were yet infants; and shortly after, her unmarried sister also died, leaving sixty thousand pounds to be divided between her nieces, in addition to the wealth they were already entitled to in right of their deceased parent. The second girl followed the example of her mother and aunt; the eldest had lately become Duchess of R——; and the Lady Alicia, now just nineteen—beautiful, graceful, and accomplished,—remained to tantalize the gentlemen, and more especially Mr. D'Esterre, who, independent of her more substantial qualifications, considered the young Heiress by far the most attractive being he had ever met with.

Lady Alicia Frampton, however, appeared to

entertain no such favourable impression of him : on the contrary, her manner towards him was as reserved as the Marquis's had been frigid. Indeed, on one memorable evening, when all the fashionable world were assembled at D—— House, and Perceval, hurried on by the admiration he could not restrain, endeavoured to engage his fair relative in conversation, hoping thus to establish something like intimacy between them, Lady Alicia testified her unwillingness so very unequivocally, and lavished the attention he had vainly sought to gain, with such openness upon an exceedingly plain-looking person (a certain Sir Allan Stuart, brother to the present Marchioness), that D'Esterre, vexed and mortified, looked eagerly around in search of some less fastidious fair one, on whom he might bestow the homage thus disdainfully rejected. Janet Irving chanced that night to be in high beauty, and great request amongst the gentlemen ; to her side Perceval attached himself, and, for five or six

weeks afterwards, plied her with assiduities resulting but from pique, and having for their object nothing beyond amusement for the passing hour.

He was decidedly to blame : still, if his conduct were reprehensible, it was not, at any rate, uncommon. Very few men there are who can lay their hands honestly upon their hearts and say—they have never done as much ; nor are there, perhaps, many women of sufficient beauty to render them attractive, who have not, at one period or another, found themselves the subjects of unmeaning attentions. Yet, he was wrong—nor may we offer an excuse on his behalf, unless it be the inconsiderate thoughtlessness of his character, joined to the belief that Miss Irving's feelings were by no means compromised. She would, doubtless, have accepted him, if he had asked her, just as she would have accepted any other man of good connexions and reputed fortune, but her affection was altogether silent in the business.

Thus would Perceval have reasoned had he thought at all upon the subject. I am, however, much inclined to think he never gave himself that trouble. But, when a man thus trifles with a woman's feelings, he does not always play the winning game: the hour came when Perceval saw cause to rue his selfish and ungenerous conduct towards Janet Irving.

Towards the close of that season he chanced again to meet his haughty kinswoman, when, prompted either by caprice, or the desire of atoning for her former all but rudeness—she accosted him with a degree of friendliness as remarkable as had been her former coldness. The Marchioness was equally affable and kind; Perceval was reminded of their relationship, reproached with the unfrequency of his visits in St. James's Square—and given to understand, in the most winning manner, that, although Lady Cotswold never saw visitors until two o'clock, a *relative* would always gain admission. Mr. D'Esterre was far from being an ill-tem-

pered man, and he returned home, not only forgiving, but very much enchanted with Lady Alicia Frampton.

Of course, he presented himself the following morning at the house, he was readily admitted, and ushered into the Boudoir of the Marchioness. Here he found both ladies; the younger with a drawing pencil in her hand; the elder, laudably employed in doing nothing. At the conclusion of a long, and, to Perceval, delightful visit, he was asked to dine on the ensuing day; but a prior engagement, which he could not break, obliged him, most unwillingly, to decline the invitation.

"That is very unlucky," observed the Marchioness, "for we leave town on Monday."

"But," replied Lady Alicia, in her softest tone, "Ringland is not far from Hartingfield."

"And Mr. D'Esterre will make that distance shorter by often riding over," said the Marchioness.

As may be supposed, Mr. D'Esterre eagerly

expressed his willingness to prove a good neighbour.

“But, above all,” rejoined Lady Cotswold, you must hold yourself disengaged for the second week in August; or rather, you must consider yourself engaged to us. We have an archery meeting on the eleventh; promise you will make one of our party.”

Perceval was only too happy to promise.

The Cotswolds left town—he speedily followed; and, while Janet relieved the dulness of her life at Atherley with buoyant hope, as groundless as it was natural, her recreant knight was devoting himself entirely to her rival, without lavishing one single thought on her. He was, in fact, completely fascinated; and, without waiting to inquire what had caused so great and sudden an alteration, gave himself up to a delirium of delight. The Marquis, to be sure, was quite as stiff and disagreeable as before. But what was that to Perceval? Lady Alicia was all smiles—the Marchioness all consideration—and he, all happiness.

For many years past, nothing so gay and splendid as the Cotswold archery meeting had enlivened ——shire:—rank, beauty, fashion, crowded from a distance, and all the leading people of the county met at Hartingfield. Amidst the throng of young men, thus assembled, still was D'Esterre the favoured cavalier, and, as if to complete his triumph, the hunch-backed Baronet figured amongst the guests, and was treated by Lady Alicia with as much reserve and coldness as it had been formerly his lot to feel.

Perhaps, therefore, it is not wonderful that his brain turned giddy; nor should we marvel very much that, finding himself riding alone by Lady Alicia's side, in a dark shady lane, one glorious afternoon, when the heaven above glowed with the sapphires' hue—and golden beams chequered the velvet sward—glancing now here, now there, as Zephyr wooed the rustling leaves, and they shrunk coyly from the god's approach, Perceval ventured to unfold his love—his hopes—his fears.

The lady was excessively surprised, vexed, and obliged—had no expectation of anything of this nature; was grieved at the pain she caused him, but hoped they might always remain friends and good neighbours; then, putting her steed into a canter, joined the rest of the party who were a few yards in advance. The discomfited D'Esterre would gladly have turned his horse's head and galloped home, but such a proceeding would have rendered his defeat too public; nothing therefore remained but to follow her example. The Marchioness made room for him, and, during the remainder of the ride, which was the most unpleasant he had ever taken, addressed her conversation almost exclusively to him. Still there was something in her manner that assured him she guessed all that had taken place—and he could not but fear that, ere many hours had passed over their heads, the remainder of the party would be equally enlightened—and they, in their turn, would retail the interesting piece

of mind, most excessivel

Thus was Perceval rej
afterwards, a slow conse
reluctant Marquis to h
with Sir Allan Stuart.

“Why,” said Miss Wh
one of those unfortunate
who lived a good dea
when they were at Har
seasons made herself c
imparting family chit-c
Allan Stuart was refused

“And so he was. ‘
hear of it; and the on
matter was ever brought
place in London, I kno
it’s my firm belief, Sir A

"Then, in fact, *he* was made a tool of. Served to blind Lord Cotswold?"

"Exactly."

"What a strange taste Lady Alicia must have, that, amongst all her admirers, she should fix upon so odd a looking person as Sir Allan?"

"Oh, he's immensely clever — the most delightful companion. Crooked people, you know, frequently are. Besides, he's own brother to the Marchioness, and between you and me, Lady Alicia is completely under Lady Cotswold's influence."

"And, to judge by the event, Lady Cotswold seems to have used that influence with an entire view to her family interests."

"What can you expect from a step-mother? However, she's not so much to blame here. Sir Allan is a very amiable man, so Lady Alicia may be happy with him, if she chooses."

Although Perceval's attachment had been of too recent a date to affect his peace of mind materially, he felt his discomfiture with keen-

ness ; while the publicity attending his miscarriage added not a little to his mortification ; and, partly to get away from the scene of his failure, until the nine days' wonder should be past and gone—partly to escape the wearying condolences of Lady Gertrude, he betook himself to Eastbeach. There, as the reader is aware, he again met Miss Irving, and, after some slight shew of reluctance, was by her beguiled into a renewal of their former intimacy. But watering-places are the very last places where such proceedings pass unnoticed—a match between Mr. D'Esterre and Miss Irving became the current rumour of the day—and Perceval thought it high time to make his retreat.

He returned to Ringland, and, through Lady Kingsbury's skilful misrepresentation, his flight was construed into an evidence of defeat.

CHAPTER II.

SINCE her husband's death, and latterly, not altogether to her son's satisfaction, Lady Gertrude D'Esterre had resided about half a mile from Ringland. She was a person whose naturally narrow capacity had become even more confined by her association with only two or three chosen companions, whose age and opinions corresponded with her own. She never read—she talked all day—she rarely imbibed a fresh idea, but when she did, it was like a cat with a mouse—a child with a new toy; not for one instant would she let it rest, however trifling

the subject, she could think of nothing else, and, however unpalatable to her auditors, no other topic was allowed to pass her lips. She was a small, spare woman, with a sharp nose, and piercing light grey eyes—a thin, wiry voice, which grated sadly on the ear, and well nigh threw her listeners into a nervous fever.

“Ah, Perceval, I’m glad you’ve come in; it was getting so late, I was afraid you would go straight home without calling to-day, and I want particularly to speak to you. Sit down and tell me what’s the meaning of this paragraph in the ——shire Mercury. I’ve been puzzling over it all the morning, and can’t in the least make it out; so it is really very fortunate you have called. I’m sure I couldn’t have slept for anxiety—do tell me what it all means. And who is Lady K—b—y? stay, I will read it to you. But would it not be better to send away your horse, and dine with me?”

Perceval rang the bell. It was late; he was hungry; and he knew by the expression of his

worthy mother's countenance that, whatever might be the nature of the mystery at present weighing on her mind, the discussion would prove lengthy.

"Now," said Lady Gertrude, when the servant had received his instructions, and shut the door; "do tell me what all this can mean? Where is it?—oh, here." Then, in a cracked, discordant voice, she read aloud, as follows:—
"Rejected addresses—second edition. Cœlebs has been again unlucky. P*r**v*! D'E*t***e, Esq., whose assiduities towards the fair daughter of the house of C**s***d have rendered him so remarkable in the county, has once more proved himself an unsuccessful wooer. The object of his admiration, one of the lovely nieces of Lady K****b**ry, at present sojourning at Eastbeach, is, we understand, possessed of considerable fortune, in addition to her other numerous attractions. Another time, we should advise Mr. D'E*t***e, who is, we believe, a harmless, well-disposed young gentleman, to

warmth than he usually
Editor of that paper is e
a fool, if he believes so r
liar, if he circulates wha
untrue."

"That's just what I th
after counting the stars and
paragraph must apply to y
be false, for Perceval woul
as to commit himself again
must be done?"

"Nothing."

"Nothing! then everyb
report."

"If they do, it is of li
don't care two straws what
D'Esterre: looking and

and I have been drawing up a letter, which I thought of sending to the Editor of the Mercury—see, if you approve of it.”

“I think it will be better to take no steps whatever in this matter. If left to itself, the subject will drop to the ground.”

“But, in the meantime, every body will believe you have been again refused.”

“Let them,” replied Perceval, offering his arm to conduct his mother to the dining-room.

“But,” pursued Lady Gertrude, when their silent meal was ended, and the servants had withdrawn, “what I can’t understand is, how such a paragraph ever got into the newspaper at all.”

“It got in, because Mr. ——, whatever is his name, chose to insert it. There are some people in this world who are never happy but when they are inventing, or retailing, lies.”

“And is it, really, quite unfounded?”

Mr. D’Esterre replied by helping himself to wine.

cherries. Have you heard
land?"

"I had a letter from
—they are all quite well.
subject. Why should the
cure have fixed upon you
really very much afraid—

"Isn't that rain?"

"Very likely; the weather
ing all the afternoon, and
in consequence."

"Pearson tells me rain

"I dare say. The fact
ing something," replied
then, returning to her place
into her son's face, as she
of people the Kingsbury

are. And her nieces — faith, I hardly know what to say of them.”

“Then I suppose you were not very intimate; it’s really very strange such a report should have arisen.”

In his inmost heart, Perceval found himself compelled to acknowledge it was not so very strange.

“Was there anybody at Eastbeach that you knew besides these Kingsburys?”

“There were some men there of my acquaintance. And I believe our neighbours the Davenports arrived two or three days before I left it.”

“And they returned home last week,” rejoined Lady Gertrude, looking remarkably knowing.

When Perceval entered the room after dinner, he found his sapient mother poring over the newspaper.

“I am looking,” she said, “to see whether there is anything further about that report.

It really is very extraordinary how it got into the paper at all; and just as unlucky as if it had been true. You will gain the credit of having been refused, and that may prove a serious drawback on any future occasion. No girl of any degree of consequence would choose to marry a man who had been twice rejected in so short a time. I knew a gentleman once, who was called the *solicitor general*, only because he made one or two unfortunate proposals."

Perceval stirred the fire, at the same time thinking that if there be in the world one thing more tiresome and provoking than all the rest—it is a curious old woman.

"Did you say there were two Miss Kingsburys?" asked Lady Gertrude, her curiosity and suspicions forcibly awakened by D'Esterre's evident indisposition to enter upon the subject.

"Did you say there are two Miss Kingsburys?"

"There are no Miss Kingsburys at all. The young ladies in question are daughters of a sis-

ter of the late Baronet's; she was twice married. First, to a gentleman of the name of Irving, and afterwards to a Major Berrington, who is still alive."

"Berrington, Berrington?" cried Lady Gertrude, "what Berrington? there are two families of that name; both, however, probably originally the same; does Lady Kingsbury's niece belong to either of them? you know who I mean; Sir William Twisden married on daughter—Staffordshire people. Do you think Lady Kingsbury's niece is related to them, or to the Cornwall Berringtons?"

"To neither, I imagine. For, unless my memory deceives me, her father's place is in one of the northern counties."

"Is he a man of fortune?"

"I hardly know."

"He resides on his property?"

"Yes; I remember Lady Kingsbury saying Major Berrington has not quitted home for years; is, in fact, quite a recluse."

"Do you know the name of his place?"

"The Grange."

"Some fine old family place, I suppose," observed Lady Gertrude.

"Perhaps so; but I really know nothing about it, excepting that, as I told you, Major Berrington leads a very retired life with his only child."

"An *only* child?"

"So I was informed."

"What sort of a girl?"

"Exceedingly handsome. Indeed, promises to be a splendid woman," replied Perceval, with a degree of animation which did not escape his mother.

"And well educated?"

"Her singing is exquisite; at least, so I thought, the only time I had an opportunity of judging. What Miss Berrington may be in other respects, it is not easy to determine, for she is excessively shy, and, unlike the generality of girls, makes no display. But, you

know, intellectual acquirements are the last points on which we have cause to doubt, in these days, when every woman is like a walking library."

"Beautiful, modest, accomplished, and wealthy," said Lady Gertrude, in a slow, enumerating manner.

"We know nothing of the wealth," replied Perceval, smiling.

"If she be the only child of a man of landed property, she must have some, if not a handsome, fortune."

"True," replied Perceval.

"Does she appear amiable?"

"Very. I should think the sweetness of her temper rarely equalled."

"Just the sort of person I should like for a daughter-in-law," thought Lady Gertrude. "I suppose, Perceval, you saw a great deal of Miss Berrington?"

"No; I rather avoided her society."

"Why?"

"Because she is precisely the girl a man would be likely to fall in love with. And I have no intention again of making a fool of myself."

"Ah, what a pity it is you were so precipitate in that business of Lady Alicia's. If you had only waited for my advice—"

"Good night," said Perceval, quickly.

"Going already?" said Lady Gertrude, in amazement; "won't you have some coffee? and it rains, I'm sure it rains—Perceval, do stay, and I will order the coffee immediately. Perceval, Perceval—"

But the slamming of the hall-door was Perceval's only answer; he was, in truth, thoroughly annoyed; and walked home regardless of the rain, the wind—of everything but his vexation.

"I think I should like that Miss Berrington very much—I've no doubt she would make an excellent wife—just such an one as I did—I wish Perceval would marry her," soliloquized.

Lady Gertrude, when she had recovered the abruptness of her son's departure.

It was some little time before Mr. D'Esterre succeeded in effecting an entry into his house; and then he found the window-shutters still unclosed, and the fire in the library nearly out. In fact, he was not expected home at so early an hour; the housekeeper was drinking tea with a friend in the village, and the other servants thought it far more expedient to attend to their amusement than their duty. He drew his chair towards the fire-place, and remained for some time meditating on the discomfort of bachelor establishments, and the vexations to which single gentlemen, who choose to amuse themselves as he had done, are liable. Then ordered coffee—but, as Mrs. Thompson was absent, the order was in vain.

“Very provoking, this!” he exclaimed, after ringing the bell for the third time, and receiving the same answer to his demand that had been previously given.

"The coffee will be ready immediately, sir," the servant said; which meant as soon as the important Mrs. Thompson should have been hunted to her post.

"Monstrous provoking! not to be borne with. I must look out for another housekeeper. Mrs. Thompson has been here too long." He took up a book—read for half an hour, and, having at length succeeded in procuring some black, muddy-looking coffee, went shivering to bed.

CHAPTER III.

MR. D'ESTERRE passed a most remarkably uncomfortable night; he had, at one time, the night-mare; at another, in his dreams he was pursued from place to place by Lady Kingsbury and Mr. Horace Smith, holding each other hand in hand. He fell down a precipice—he was killed in a duel; and every-where those onerous words — “Rejected addresses,” were before his eyes. He had, in fact, taken cold, and the next day was seriously indisposed, ordered to be blooded and keep his bed, at the foot of which, Lady Gertrude, accompanied by a large basket of wor , established herself.

This was the worst of all. Lady Gertrude, disagreeable any-where, was positively unbearable in a sick room; and as, in a more cracked and discordant tone of voice than usual, she descanted on her son's twofold imprudence in catching cold and flirting with Janet Irving, Perceval's nervous irritability rose to an almost ungovernable pitch. And here, be it remarked that even a hint at the wrong he had committed in trifling with another never escaped Lady Gertrude; nor did she evince much commiseration in his present suffering; but for the consequence to himself, he might have broken Janet's heart without in any measure rousing his mother's indignation; and as for his illness—it appeared something to complain of, not to pity. There is very little real sympathy in this world.

“ I really think,” said the tiresome old woman, after about two hours' talking on the very disagreeable theme: “ Perceval, I really think, it's a great pity you did not select Miss Berrington, instead of her sister: I wish you had, Perceval.”

"Why?" said Perceval querulously, as he flung himself round and tried to interpose the pillow between his ear and his mama's inharmonious voice. "Why, in the name of wonder, do you wish that?"

"Because you might have become seriously attached to her. It certainly is to be desired that you should marry, and she seems just the sort of girl to suit you."

"Perhaps, she would not have had me."

"Very unlikely indeed;" (and so, to say the truth, thought Perceval too) "there is a wide difference between the daughter of a country gentleman who has lived all her life in retirement, and Lady Alicia Frampton. What are you going to do? Why do you ring the bell? Do you want any thing?"

"I shall get up."

"Get up, my dear Perceval? You forget Mr. Cookham desired particularly—"

"It matters not; I can bear this no longer."

Perceval, however, gained but a short respite

—

by his disregard of Mr. Cookham's injunction. After spinning out his toilet to the utmost, he found himself once more exposed to Lady Gertrude's tormenting discourse. He tried to read, but his head ached—his eyes watered ; the book was thrown aside. Lady Gertrude offered her services ; Perceval, glad to be rid of her conversation on any terms, assented. His mother folded her work with the greatest precision, drew her spare figure up to its utmost, cleared her throat several times, and then, in the shrillest tone, commenced reading a description of the transports of an accepted lover. After a quarter of an hour's endurance, Perceval's patience was fairly exhausted, and he declared he must return to bed.

" I thought so ; I knew it would be so ;" said Lady Gertrude, as she left the room. " Watson, let me know as soon as your master is settled."

" What a confounded bore my mother is," said Perceval that night, when, at length,

Lady Gertrude had taken her final departure ; and then, not altogether unnaturally, considering the topic of that days' conversation, he thought of Georgina, and, in imagination, her soft dark eyes, so shy, yet so expressive, timidly met his ; her buoyant footstep traversed the apartment ; above all—her sweetly modulated voice fell in melodious tones upon his ear.

“ It would be something to be nursed by such a being as that ;” said he, as he turned himself round to sleep, and, thanks to a soothing draught, slept well, and dreamed of Georgy Berrington.

The following day found Perceval D'Esterre better ; but Mr. Cookham still prescribed confinement, draughts, &c. Lady Gertrude was again at her post enacting the nurse ; and as Perceval resolutely refused to keep his bed or room, she pursued him about the house with a yellow bandana silk handkerchief in one hand, and a bottle of medicine in the other, entreating him to remember Mr. Cookham's injunctions.

In the many delinquencies of her son's house-keeper, Lady Gertrude discovered, however, a fresh and fruitful theme for conversation ; and as Perceval's reception at home, two evenings back, was still fresh on his mind, he entered upon the subject with sufficient readiness.

" Yes," pursued her Ladyship, " your household wants regulation sadly ; that Mrs. Thompson is, as I always thought her, a very good-for-nothing person, and I have no doubt it is to her extravagance and mismanagement you owe much of your present embarrassment. Depend upon it, she cheats you finely."

" Very likely," replied her son.

" Of course, you mean to dismiss her."

" If I did," said Perceval, who hated the trouble of changing a servant ; " I suppose I should be no better off. All servants are the same ; at least all bachelors' servants. With a female head, the household might go on better ; but, it will be some time, I fancy, before Ringland receives a mistress."

"You mean to say that you have no serious thoughts of marrying?"

"None," rejoined Perceval, although he had entertained ideas of the kind very frequently that morning, and more than once had solaced himself during his mother's long harangue with contrasting her voice with Georgina's dulcet tones—her sharp and peevish mouth and chin, with Georgina's deep red lip and radiant smile.

"Well;" observed Lady Gertrude, looking almost pleased, "if that be really your determination, I have less hesitation in proposing a scheme that occurred to me last night, which will, I think, prove highly advantageous to you."

"What is that?" asked Perceval, languidly.

"That we should live together."

"Live together!"

"Yes. You know my term is out in March, and from that time nothing would be easier than to throw our establishments into one, I should

of course, contribute towards the general expenditure, and the advantage of an experienced head to the ménage will be incalculable. I dare say you would live for half the expense you do now."

"I thought you intended to settle in Edinburgh?"

"I did think of it, to be near my sister. But you are, and ever will be, my first object."

"I have half resolved upon shutting up Ringland for a couple of years, and spending that time abroad."

"Well, that need not interfere with our living together; I should enjoy the change. People may live very economically on the continent; but to make it answer, you must stay, at least, three years. But, when once across the channel, one, two or three, or even four years, would be all the same to me. This summer we might spend at Brientz, or some other quiet part of Switzerland; and we might winter at Rome, or Naples, as we felt disposed. The

Davenports were abroad last year, and rented a small place at Lausanne; living is very cheap in Switzerland."

Perceval was aghast! The idea of spending a summer shut up with his wearisome mother in a Swiss Cottage—of being dragged over the continent chained to her chariot-wheels, even to have her established a constant inmate at Ringland would be beyond the power of human patience to endure—yet, how avert this terrible infliction—what method was there of escaping so obnoxious an expedient? Lady Gertrude was not a person to be easily shaken off—like Sinbad's man of the sea, it was impossible to move her.

Indeed, when a woman once sets her heart upon accomplishing any particular fancy she usually succeeds. Mr. D'Esterre neither loved nor revered his mother; yet, from long habit and early association, he was considerably under Lady Gertrude's influence.

In all domestic matters, women have far

more influence than men; this may seem strange, since the reins are, or ought to be, in the hands of the most powerful. It is, however, very certain that the females of a family can, and do, control, lead, aye, and govern, their liege lords; while they themselves continue to go their own way. One reason may be that *their* weapons are numerous, whilst, on the other side, there is not much beyond authority and superior judgment. For persuasion, men have not patience; besides, persuasion is beneath the stately dignity of man—they may, certainly, advise; but few people listen to opinions adverse to their wishes; and power is a means they seldom like to use.

But woman — dear little, lecture - loving woman, with her weak head and clinging heart, has a thousand ways of gaining her point. She can tease, she can coax, she can pout; or, like Lady Gertrude, talk her adversary over. Like the mouse in the fable, if she have but patience still to nibble on, she will at last succeed; one

after another, the meshes will give way, and her object be obtained. Men have, besides, if I may use the term, a sort of moral fear of women ; perhaps it is a lingering beam of chivalry's bright day. Not many years ago, during the holding of a court martial in this neighbourhood, the unfortunate being, whose conduct was the subject of inquiry, is said to have exclaimed, "I can bear anything but the jeering of the women." That night the wretched man destroyed himself. Yes—woman's influence is great indeed. Why does she so rarely use the talent thus committed to her charge, for ends more noble and exalted than the advancement of her own wishes—the gratification of her selfish whims?

For about half an hour Lady Gertrude continued to dilate on the advantages of her scheme, and Perceval to ponder how it might be evaded without a downright quarrel. At last, in a fit of perfect desperation, he betook himself to his dressing-room, and, having

locked the door, penned the epistle which created so much sensation at Atherley, and determined Georgina's destiny for life.

"There," said he, folding his dispatch, "if I am accepted, there is an end of my mother's abominable plan; the lie will be given to this confounded report, and I shall gain one of the handsomest girls in England for a wife. If I'm refused, there will be no great reason to complain—seeing I have never taken much trouble to make myself agreeable to Miss Berrington."

On re-considering the subject, Mr. D'Esterre remained satisfied with the path he had chosen: even on the score of money, he felt little uneasiness; for Lady Kingsbury, according to her usual habit, had spoken in glowing terms of Major Berrington's place; even Janet, hoping by her discretion to forward her own interests, had carefully concealed her sister's slender circumstances. It was true, estates are frequently entailed on the male heir. Perceval

remembered this, and felt a qualm. It was also true there had been at Eastbeach a report of a pre-engagement; this too occurred to Mr. D'Esterre's mind, and his courage failed; but at that moment Lady Gertrude came, for the third time, rattling at the door, full of anxiety to know, "whether he wanted anything?" His resolution instantly returned, and having added a postscript, begging Major Berrington would destroy, instead of delivering the enclosed letter, should Miss Berrington's affections be in any measure compromised, he hastily sealed the packet, and delivered it in charge to Watson.

"What's that?" asked Lady Gertrude, who took advantage of the unlocked door to effect an entrance. "What's all that, Perceval?"

"A letter to my upholsterer," replied her son.

"A double letter?"

"Yes; he has thought proper to overcharge me for the dining-room tables, and I am

sending back his account to have the error rectified. Watson, let it be put at once into the letter bag."

"Yes, Sir," answered Watson, carefully concealing the superscription of the packet from Lady Gertrude's scrutinizing glance.

The answer was, and was not, satisfactory. Whilst, on the one hand, Mr. D'Esterre's vanity was gratified by Georgina's acceptance of his offer, on the other, his prudence became alarmed: for Major Berrington, after stating that, upon his demise, Georgina would succeed to all he possessed, regretted his total inability to make her, at present, the most trifling allowance.


What the *all* would amount to was not mentioned; for it never occurred to Major Berrington, whose life had been for many years nothing but a long race with poverty, that any one could suspect him of being otherwise than poor. Perceval felt uneasy and dissatisfied, but he had gone too far to recede with honour.

He consoled himself, therefore, with the reflection that, though not wealthily endowed, Georgina was a very lovely creature, and that in marrying her he should become the husband of one of the most beautiful women in the country. Besides, Major Berrington had mentioned difficulties, and it did not follow these would last for ever; all landed proprietors are liable at times to be hampered in their means; it was, at any rate, quite evident no entail existed — Georgina would eventually succeed to the estate. And, having come to this conclusion, Perceval, with his wonted thoughtless extravagance, gave orders for new furniture and additional servants.

During D'Esterre's visit to Atherley, that visit which so speedily taught him the folly of his precipitate proposal, Lady Gertrude was not inactive. Informed of the successful issue of the negotiation, and little guessing its monetary drawback, she became confident her son was on the eve of forming a most advan-

tageous marriage; and, in the elation of her spirits, mentioned the auspicious circumstance to a confidential friend, who, of course, repeated the information; and, by the time Perceval returned to Ringland, it was currently reported and believed, throughout the neighbourhood, that he was on the point of marrying a beautiful girl of large fortune, from the north of England; where, I know not why, girls of large fortune are usually supposed to be more abundant than elsewhere—and Mr. D'Esterre received from all sides friendly congratulations on an engagement he would have been only too happy to break off.

There are some men who would have contrived to manœuvre themselves out of the scrape, and so, perhaps, would Perceval D'Esterre have done (fully aware as he was that Georgina's affections could not be deeply engaged), but for the risk of incurring the ridicule of a three-fold failure. This his sensitive vanity forbade—and thus, rather than submit to



a temporary mortification, he persevered in the engagement; and, after giving a few additional instructions to the servants, he betook himself to the metropolis, under pretence of directing the settlements, but in reality to escape his mother's inquisitiveness, and the ill-timed felicitations of his friends and acquaintance.

That an engagement thus hastily contracted would prove the prelude to a happy union was exceedingly problematical; for, to say nothing of her being portionless, Georgina Berrington was one of the last women in all England Mr. D'Esterre should have selected for his wife. He should have chosen a well-bred, highly-connected girl, who had mixed in society—whose habits and opinions were, like his own, formed by the data of the fashionable world; above all, he should not have singled out the sister of a woman whose affections he had won, and thrown away. This latter circumstance it was that most materially threatened the happiness of the newly-married pair: for, though as

yet Perceval might not be said to love, hardly, indeed, to prefer, his young wife, it was not possible he could long remain untouched by so much beauty and sweetness—while she, gentle and affectionate, by no means destitute of talent, would speedily have become moulded to the wishes of a husband she was intently desirous to please.

The marriage, as our readers are aware, took place. Georgina was conducted to her future home; and the neighbourhood, nearly fevered with impatience to become acquainted with the chosen of the fastidious, the elegant D'Esterre, beheld a shy, retiring, almost awkward country girl. For Georgina's timidity, be it understood by all, was real, bona fide, shyness: not such as we sometimes find described in books, where the heroine, all shrinking bashfulness—all retiring modesty, can yet discourse on any given topic with coolness and precision; and, although nurtured in the utmost seclusion, never fails to conduct herself with as much dignity and

grace, and self-possession, as though she had been bred within the precincts of a Court. Such was not Georgina's case; hers was that feeling which unsettles the complexion, gives an uneasy restraint to the movements, and, above all, renders intercourse with strangers a painful and difficult effort.

Poor Georgina's début in ——shire was anything but triumphant; and, as if to throw her more completely into the shade, a few weeks after her marriage with Perceval, Lady Alicia Stuart, who had also recently become a wife, arrived on a visit to her father, the Marquis of Cotswold. Although, strictly speaking, Georgina was infinitely the handsomest, the contrast between the two brides was exceedingly disadvantageous to her; with the exception of one or two male connoisseurs who looked only to *beauty*, all the votes were in favour of the high-born, fashionable, well-dressed, Lady Alicia; and Perceval, ever swayed by public suffrage, became daily more dissatisfied with his hastily-

formed union, and less inclined to view with indulgence any trifling infringement of the rules of etiquette of which Georgina might be guilty.

She, quick-sighted and apprehensive, as the timid always are, soon became aware of what was passing in his mind, and henceforth the affection she entertained towards her husband was darkened by mistrust—embittered with anxiety. She had never been quite at her ease with Perceval; now, she absolutely feared him, and became, in consequence, while in his presence, twenty times more nervous and embarrassed than before. Even their tête-à-tête evenings were not exempt from this uncomfortable state of feeling; she dared not enter into conversation, sometimes hardly to walk across the room, and never opened the piano but with trembling, lest he should ask for some song or piece of music, of which, perhaps, she did not even know the name.

In every respect Georgina's excessive bashfulness operated unfavourably; for Perceval

could not but perceive how great was the deference she felt towards him; and it did not tend to raise her in his estimation. A woman should be obedient, gentle, willing to sacrifice her wishes to those of her legal master. But let her not be servile; she will reap nothing by undue submission, except, perhaps, contempt. As Rebecca very truly said, few men act generously towards their wives; and, if a man sees reason to believe *his* is ready to submit to every thing, it is more than probable he will prove a tyrannical or careless husband. The latter was Perceval's bias, for he was not naturally either ill-tempered, or ill-natured.

I hope my readers estimate my candour and fair dealing. Not many pages back I said a few words on the abuse of female influence, and now the gentlemen have had their turn.

CHAPTER IV.

IF, in the sentiments Georgina entertained towards her husband, it were impossible to whether fear or love predominated, his most speedily became an object of unmitigated dislike to her; for Lady Gertrude D'Esterre neither long in discovering that, excepting gentleness of disposition, Georgina was nothing but the daughter-in-law she would select, nor backward in testifying to the offensive young creature how unwelcome an addition to the family she was reckoned.

goaded her son into the engagement, she now chose to consider it as having emanated from himself alone; and took every opportunity of lamenting the unfortunate entanglement into which his rashness had plunged him, and of magnifying the disadvantages of the connexion.

“Really,” she said, one afternoon, when Perceval had called to make a visit of dutiful enquiry, “really, it is very extraordinary you should have been so taken in? A girl without fortune, without even the education of a lady—and, as for her connexions, I have questioned her very closely, and, besides these Kingsburys (who, after all, are no great things), I can hear of nothing but Rockets and Flagges. Why, my dear Perceval, I think you must have taken a wife from the arsenal at Woolwich. Are you quite certain,” continued her Ladyship, with a look of mysterious intelligence, for a new idea and very sapient notion just then darted into her brain, “are you quite certain that this is the Miss

Berrington you met at Eastbeach—Sir William Kingsbury's niece? I can't help thinking you must have made some very strange mistake, and got yourself married to a country cousin, instead of the girl you meant. Perceval, are you quite sure this is the right Miss Berrington?"

Perceval vouchsafed no reply to this aspersions on his power of discrimination, but assured his mother that, although there was a cousin of the name of Rocket, Georgina was guiltless of having a relation bearing the other warlike denomination.

"Well, but Rocket, Rocket; who can the Rockets be—and what sort of people are they?"

"There is but one that I ever heard of," replied her son; "and she was certainly not very distinguée in appearance or manner. But why should you care what relations Georgina has? They live at an immense distance, and you, at any rate, are not likely to come in contact with them."

"What is to prevent their coming here?" asked Lady Gertrude.

"I see nothing to bring them. They are not near relations; and, to judge by their ideas and appearance, have vegetated, and will continue to vegetate, in their native village, as long as they live."

"Her father, I suppose, at all events, we must expect to see," said Lady Gertrude, with an expression almost of nausea.

"He is a great invalid and recluse, and, excepting to church, never goes beyond the boundaries of his own garden."

"Well, I'm sure, I hope he'll keep there."

Perceval silently acquiesced in that hope.

"Then," resumed Lady Gertrude, "such clothes as she wears! would you believe it, Parkins tells me she is certain they were bought in Cranbourne Alley, or some equally vulgar place."

"I think Mrs. Parkins would do well to attend to the duties of her situation as your

housekeeper, instead of troubling her head about my wife's wardrobe ; and, before we criticise, it may not be amiss to remember that, if Mrs. D'Esterre's dress is too plain and simple for her station in life, it is, at any rate, economical ; and, to a man in my circumstances, a wife of inexpensive notions may, perhaps, prove a more valuable acquisition, even though she be portionless, than one with large fortune, and ideas and habits of corresponding magnificence."

"Aye," said Lady Gertrude, "that 's all true enough ; but wait till Georgina gets to town. I'm very much mistaken if, when she sees how other young women contrive to ruin their husbands, she does not take advantage of the lesson."

"I do not think she will. Georgina is both sensible and well-disposed ; and is certainly too timid, and anxious to please me, to run the risk of incurring my displeasure."

"And is it by your express orders that, if I

chance to call before luncheon, I invariably find 'Miss at her studies?'" enquired Lady Gertrude, exceedingly provoked on finding her son persisted in defending his wife.

"Not by my orders; I have never spoken to her on the subject. But, surely, there is nothing reprehensible in a young woman thus employing her leisure hours. In our days literature is a fashionable pursuit—all women read."

"Yes; but I imagine their reading is of a very different description from that which occupies Mrs. D'Esterre. I found her the other day puzzling over Tasso, with a dictionary on one side, and a manuscript book on the other, in which she carefully noted all the hard words as she looked them out, just like a girl of twelve years old."

"Georgina has not enjoyed all the advantages many girls receive."

"No," replied Lady Gertrude, laughing; "she has not, indeed. And I have half a

mind when next I write to Scotland, to ask my sister whether her late governess has got a situation; I think a few months of her tuition would be a great advantage to Mrs. D'Esterre—and she might pass as a friend, or companion, or even a relation."

"Good morning," said Perceval starting up. "Can I do anything for you in S——?"

"Are you going so late?"

"The trustees of Winsley's school dine together to day: I, you know, am one of them."

"Then Mrs. D'Esterre may as well dine with me, and she can read aloud to me in the evening; she doesn't read aloud badly, and I want to get on with this book."

"Georgina is not well enough to venture out."

"Not well; anything of consequence? I hope she hasn't habitual bad health. Has she seen Cookham?" Asked Lady Gertrude, in some trepidation, lest, in addition to her other delinquencies, Georgina should prove likely to

increase her son's expenses by an Apothecary's bill; or, what would be worse, become the mother of a numerous family.

"Merely a cold."

"A cold: oh, then, I must go and look after her. You know I am famous for nursing colds."

"You managed mine admirably!" Thought her son, as he left the room.

About an hour afterwards, Georgina's comfort, for that afternoon, was completely destroyed by a visit from her odious mother-in-law; as her cold was in reality slight, Perceval having exaggerated it in the hope of saving her from an unpleasant tête-à-tête dinner with his mother, she was pronounced well enough to dine with Lady Gertrude; and, although that cautious person insisted on her confining herself to boiled whiting, bread pudding and barley water, Georgina was considered quite equal to reading aloud, which she did for nearly three hours, the only intermission being afforded by

Lady Gertrude's prosy, and sometimes personal, remarks on what she read.

In a true marital spirit Mr. D'Esterre had defended his wife ; nevertheless, his mother's ill-natured observations were not lost upon him ; and, from that time, although he abstained from all comment on the subject, he never saw Georgina reading or writing without internally regretting he had married a woman whose education had not been completed ; while Georgina, who in studying, had but the single object of remedying her own deficiencies, and thus rendering herself a more fitting companion for her husband, became saddened and dispirited by the little interest he appeared to take in her pursuits.

Nor could he sometimes forbear hinting a wish that her wardrobe were less scantily supplied. Georgina would gladly have acted on this hint, but as Perceval, with his usual thoughtlessness, omitted to provide the where-withal, and she had been unaccustomed to run

up bills, she could only feel mortified, and more than usually shy, when next obliged to wear the dress that had provoked his strictures.

Altogether, Georgina's brilliant marriage was far from proving happy ; and, sore at heart and lonely, surrounded though she was by elegance and splendour, the drooping girl would often sigh for her still cherished cottage-home ; and pine for the society of the indulgent friends she had left behind.

CHAPTER V.

ABOUT this time the annual ball for the county hospital took place : Mr. D'Esterre dined with his fellow stewards ; and Lady Gertrude intimated her intention of accompanying Georgina thither ; an arrangement disagreeable enough in itself, and rendered doubly unpalatable by the patronizing, favour-conferring, air Lady Gertrude assumed on the occasion. For Lady Gertrude, who hardly ever went into company (to be sure, she was not often asked), who piqued herself on her domestic habits, who was besides not in robust health, and afraid of cold, was about to

make an effort—a sacrifice—to incur a risk ; and she was quite determined that the person on whose behalf all this was to be done should be fully aware of the obligation bestowed upon her.

It is trying to the temper to be forced to do anything to which we have a decided disinclination ; and still more provoking to be treated as the obliged party. Georgina would gladly have remained at home, but her opinion was not even asked ; Perceval took it for granted she would like to go, and Lady Gertrude had resolved on self-immolation. A very wearisome affair it proved to Georgina. Lady Gertrude, who took upon herself the direction of everything, arrived full dressed to a five o'clock dinner, and as soon as the meal was concluded, she accompanied Mrs. D'Esterre to her dressing room, where a most minute inspection of her wardrobe took place.

“ And what ornaments ? ” asked Lady Gertrude, after having tossed over the scanty stock

of evening dresses presented for her ladyship's approbation.

The lady's maid opened an etui, containing the family diamonds.

"Oh no; not diamonds. Pray don't think of wearing diamonds at a public ball; it would be the very height of vulgarity," exclaimed Lady Gertrude; at the same time throwing back the lid of a very modest looking old fashioned trinket box. "Those pearl earrings are not amiss; where is the necklace?"

"I have none," said Georgina. "The set belonged to my mother, and papa divided it between my sister and myself—Janet has the necklace."

"Humph! Well, it's no great matter; pearls would not have become you, they require a fair skin, and more delicacy of complexion," glancing at her own shrivelled throat.

"Brown skins last the longest," remarked the Abigail, saucily.

"Perhaps you will be kind enough to order

coffee," said Georgina, fearful of a storm.
"By the time it is served I shall be ready."

To her infinite relief, her tormentor withdrew.

"Ma'am," said Price, "if I were you, I would wear my diamonds, whether she likes it or not; that I would, if it was only to show that I would not be treated like a baby."

"No. Lady Gertrude is the best judge; I will not run counter to her opinion."

"She has not the spirit of a piece of tape," thought the waiting woman; fully determined to take advantage of her lady's gentleness, whenever her purposes or interests might so require.

When Georgina entered the drawing-room, she found Lady Gertrude sipping her coffee.

"Ah, you are dressed at last; let me see—" Georgina let her cloak fall. Lady Gertrude scrutinized her most carefully for some little time, then, without making any remark on

served Georgina; "it is now only nine, Perceval said if we were there by ten o'clock it would be quite time enough."

"I don't know, indeed, what Perceval's opinion may be, but I have a very great objection to being the last person to enter a room: it looks like an air, a wish to create a sensation—all well enough for people who know nobody—but those who know and feel their own consequence always avoid observation.

Then, ringing the bell violently, Lady Gertrude ordered the carriage to be instantly brought round.

The distance was not great; the road was in good condition, and the horses fleet; still Lady Gertrude was not satisfied, but, during the whole drive, continued peevishly expressing

that, unaided by any cavalier, they should be obliged to work their way through the crowd.

No string of carriages, however, impeded their approach to the hotel; there was not even any considerable throng of people to witness their arrival. In fact, they were the first—the very first of all.

“Dear me, how tiresome—how very provoking. Just like those vulgar Misses who are afraid of losing the first dance! really, you should have managed better—Perceval ought to have been more explicit; and the room feels like an ice-house,” remarked Lady Gertrude, as they stood shivering before one of the fire-places.

“Some one must be first,” said Georgina, very unfortunately.

“Yes,” replied Lady Gertrude, tartly; “people who never put their nose into any thing but a public ball-room, and are determined to have the full value of their money, may, perhaps, like it, but that is neither my

case, nor my taste. Another time, however, I shall manage for myself; though I believe it will be some time before I again make such a sacrifice. Pray give me my tippet—it has fallen back.”

“Do you feel any draughts?”

“There is a current of air from that window that cuts me in two.”

“If your words were literal, and like a centipede you could be multiplied in that manner, what a misfortune would it be!” thought Georgina, as she vainly endeavoured to arrange Lady Gertrude’s ermine tippet to her satisfaction.

Gradually the room began to fill, and more than one kind hand grasped Georgina’s; and more than one fair group of girls would have willingly clustered round her—for there were mothers who could feel for the young stranger who had lately come amongst them; and her gentle, unassuming, *unwifely* manners, made

her a favourite with many of her own age, who might otherwise have envied her.

But Lady Gertrude, ever restless, hurried her away. "We shall not get seats, if we remain here; and I am quite faint already with standing so long. Lady Cotswold's party are, I see, at the other end of the room; we had better move in that direction."

Georgina offered her arm, and they threaded their way towards the head of the ball-room. Civil greetings passed between them and the Cotswold party. Lady Gertrude, at length, succeeded in establishing herself and companion in what she considered a fitting situation.

"Georgina," she said, after they had been seated about five minutes, "it's a pity you decided against wearing your diamonds — the whole set might, certainly, have been too much; but some of the ornaments would not have looked amiss—considering, too, how very plain your dress is. Lady Alicia Stuart, I see, has on emeralds; and Mrs. Hamilton Brown, dia-

monds, and pearls; so yours would not have been out of place. I am afraid Perceval will be disappointed, I know he likes to see a woman well dressed."

"Another time I will profit by your advice."

"Another time it will be quite different. It is as a bride—only as a bride you could with propriety have worn jewels at a place like this. Both Lady Alicia, and Mrs. Hamilton Brown are newly-married; I wonder you did not remember it."

Georgina was silent. Lady Gertrude amused herself with opening and shutting her fan, and then poured forth a string of questions.

"Georgina, who is that you have been speaking to? Who is Miss Davenport going to dance with? What gentleman is it that bowed to me across the room? Do you see anything of Perceval? Do tell me, who is that in pink and silver? and that elderly man with a bald head, so like the Duke of B——, who is he?—You don't know? Well, how very strange. You

should, really, have your wits more about you."

But, considering that Georgina had only been in that neighbourhood a few weeks, it was not at all singular she could not act sponsor to the many individuals who attracted Lady Gertrude's attention.

Presently Lady Gertrude's fan began to open and shut with redoubled vigour ; for she saw a short, vulgar, overdressed man accost Mrs. D'Esterre and ask her to dance, and—she saw Mrs. D'Esterre rise from her seat, and take the arm of the unknown plebeian.

Now the fact was this : some evenings previously, after a dinner party, Sir Henry Ardingford, a near relation of Lord Cotswold's, asked Georgina to join in a waltz, which the young people had with some difficulty contrived to make up. But a married woman's dancing, more particularly waltzing, did not agree with her notions of propriety ; she accordingly declined ; and Sir Henry Ardingford, a very con-

ceived youth, who thought he had conferred an honour on Mrs. D'Esterre in selecting her for his partner, felt and looked offended by her refusal. Perceval was annoyed; he wished particularly to avoid anything that might seem like resentment towards the Cotswold family.

"Why did you refuse to dance this evening?" He enquired rather sharply.

"I do not think a married woman ought to dance."

"Why not?"

Georgina hesitated for a reason, and then not immediately finding one, said, "you have no objection then to my dancing?"

"None in the world. I wish you to do that, or anything else, that pleases you—but, above all, to avoid giving offence."

"Was Sir Henry Ardingford offended?"

"I think so."

"I will dance whenever I am asked again," thought Georgina—and now that the temptation of joining in an amusement of which she

was exceedingly fond, together with an escape from Lady Gertrude, were presented to her, she readily accepted the invitation, without suspecting that, although Perceval wished her to dance with the exclusive Sir Henry Ardingford, he would not be equally pleased to see her stand up with the plebeian Mr. Wagstaff. Still less did it occur to her that, at a public ball, it was not considered etiquette to dance at all.

The company at S—— might be divided into three classes. First, the high Aristocracy who honoured the assembly with their presence, but would on no account have compromised their dignity by joining in the amusement—then the Squirearchy, and one or two families resident in the town, who formed their own sets, and stood up only with their own immediate acquaintance—and a third and more numerous class, consisting of the families of the medical men, solicitors, gentleman farmers, and inferior residents at S——, who danced anywhere and anyhow, and enjoyed themselves excessively.

It was in a quadrille, formed of the last mentioned individuals, that Perceval, who with some members of the Cotswold family, entered the rooms at a late hour, saw Georgina standing ; while her vulgar partner, with bowed out arm, and pointed toe, and smile of self-complacency, flew backwards and forwards in the figure of *La Poule*.

“Who, in the world, is Georgina dancing with?” he enquired of his august mother.

“I really cannot say—I know nothing of the gentleman. Some acquaintance of her own, I conclude.”

Perceval turned away, and approached Lady Cotswold. The Cotswold family were fond of quizzing—Lady Alicia Stuart, and a cousin of hers, Lord Olivius Yerfourd, were supposed to be great adepts in that pleasing and amiable pastime. They were all looking towards the quadrille, where Mr. Wagstaff was performing his graceful evolutions ; and, from the sudden silence and gravity assumed as Perceval drew

near, it was quite evident Georgina had furnished her share of amusement.

The quadrille ended, but Mrs. D'Esterre returned not. In fact, annoyed by the observation she felt he had attracted, as well as by the forward conceit of Mr. Wagstaff, she gladly exchanged him for a more eligible partner, Sir Henry Ardingford; and then, Mr. Wagstaff again solicited the favour of her hand; but Georgina refused—she had no wish for a second exhibition with so remarkable a performer: besides, it was getting late, and Lady Gertrude must be anxious to return home. Mr. Wagstaff, like the generality of vulgar people, was not easily repulsed; he accompanied her up the room, loudly protesting against her cruelty, and entreating she would use her sex's privilege and change her mind. They passed in front of the Cotswolds, and D'Esterre again saw a suppressed sneer of ridicule.

“I will go, and enquire for the carriage,” he said to Lady Gertrude, “Georgina must have had enough of dancing I should hope.”

Lady Gertrude drew herself up majestically, as the trio approached; and stiffly bowing to Sir Henry, darted an annihilating glance towards Wagstaff. But the low-bred are as troublesome as flies—there is no getting rid of them. Mr. Wagstaff knew that an acquaintance with one of the leading county families would greatly add to his own importance, and persisted in remaining. He took his part, and more than his part, in the conversation. Cut his jokes—laughed at them—and finally, on Perceval's return to announce the carriage, offered his arm to Lady Gertrude, although Georgina had purposely avoided an introduction. Lady Gertrude felt positively insulted, and her diminutive figure received two inches in height, as, leaning on her son, she left the scene of so much mortification.

The silence that marked the commencement of the drive home was broken by an observation from Georgina, on the crowded state of the room.

"The ball," she said, "had been well attended." A remark unfortunate in itself, and rendered still more *mal-à-propos* by the tone in which it was uttered: for, as Lady Gertrude professed to feel a very great interest in the cause for whose benefit the assembly had taken place, she naturally concluded that a well filled room must be subject for congratulation to her mother-in-law.

"Well attended!" quoth Lady Gertrude. "I do not know what your notions of good company may be—but, for my part, I have never seen such an assemblage of vulgar people. I am glad, however, you have been gratified. You are, I presume, extremely fond of dancing?"

"Yes, I like it exceedingly."

"And who, may I enquire, was your partner? I mean that individual who was so obliging as to offer me his arm."

"His name is Wagstaff."

"Wagstaff, Wagstaff!" repeated her ladyship, "and what is Mr. Wagstaff?"

"I really do not know. In fact, I scarcely know anything about him."

"He is not then a very intimate friend?"

"Oh, no. When I was at Eastbeach with Lady Kingsbury, he was there, and I danced with him once or twice."

"A watering-place acquaintance! Those watering-places are my aversion. Perceval, if your sister had lived she would never have been seen at a watering-place."

There was a brief pause, after which, Lady Gertrude resumed. "Things are greatly changed in these days—we old-fashioned people little guess all that is going on around us. It is quite right we should sometimes emerge from our solitude, though I confess this evening's experience will hardly tempt me out of my nutshell again."

Perceval yawned rather audibly, which did not increase his mother's good temper.

"When *I* was young," she continued, "it was considered neither delicate nor decorous for a newly married woman to dance the whole night in a mixed assembly—or, I may say, to dance at all; but this is, I suppose, one of the improvements of the day. I believe, however, I am not singular in my ideas. Lady Alicia Stuart, I know, refused to dance, more than once."

"Now," thought Georgina, "Perceval will surely defend me." But no, he seemed rather inclined to take Lady Gertrude's side; until, on passing the turnpike, the light streamed on Georgina's face, and, shocked at observing how much she seemed to feel his mother's ill-natured strictures, said—

"Well, well, we have had enough of this. You are not well, Georgina; you are faint," he added letting down the carriage window (for Georgina's hand, which he had taken in his, was icy cold, and the blood had left her cheek and lip, to curdle at her heart).

dancing, and now he joined his
blaming her *for* dancing.

“Perceval, I shall catch my death
if you keep that window down.”

“Georgina is faint,” he replied.

“She will catch cold too. Pray put
it up.”

Perceval drew Georgina’s cloak
and did not raise the glass.

“No, no, I am not faint—I’ve
much;” said Georgina, half pettishly
the window.”

Perceval obeyed; and Lady Ge
more displeased than ever.

“What can I have done?” excla
gina, when D’Esterre resumed his
carriage after depositing his mother
home.

amiss : Lady Gertrude appears to be so much displeased."

"That is her way; you must not mind my mother, she always was the greatest bore in life."

"But even you agreed with Lady Gertrude, and yet, you know, on Monday you bade me be careful how I refused to dance, lest I should give offence. I'am sure, I had no fancy for Mr. Wagstaff. Don't you remember speaking to me about Sir Henry Ardingford?"

"True;" rejoined Perceval; "but there is a wide difference between offending Sir Henry Ardingford, and Mr. Wagstaff."

Georgina saw the difference; and her good humour instantly returned. Perceval was exonerated from caprice.

During the short remainder of their drive, D'Esterre was all kindness towards his wife; but very soon the spirit of that false world, for which he had been educated, whose opinions had hitherto been his laws, crept over him, stifling

all better feelings; and a sentiment of disgust, almost amounting to aversion, took possession of his mind as he recalled the ball-room, with Georgina's partner—the quadrille she had joined—and, above all, the sarcastic looks and remarks of the Cotswold group.

“Yes,” he pettishly exclaimed to himself, “Georgina is, I dare say, gentle and affectionate and obliging, and so forth; but I do wish she could contrive not to make herself ridiculous.”

Among the evil consequences arising from an apprenticeship to the vanities of the world, there are none more injurious to the character than the false views and judgments we are led to form. Pernicious follies, degrading vices, are more readily overlooked by members of a certain coterie than the most trifling deviation from the established rules of etiquette, or the slightest want of knowledge of the world. You may more easily be ignorant than inelegant—vicious than vulgar—unprincipled than unfashionable.

CHAPTER VI.

"How far to Ringland?" enquired Lady Kingsbury, of mine host of the Swan Inn, at —.

"Three miles and a half, or thereabouts. All right—drive on. Steady, boys; take care of the hill—all right."

"Three miles and a half," thought Janet, "in less than half an hour I shall be there! at Ringland—at *his* house—and receive my welcome from his wife—from Georgina, from my younger sister; and must witness his devotion to her—his affection!"

As the plantations on each side of the road marked the approach to the property, Janet sadly reverted to the idle dream she had once fostered. "Yes, yes, I loved him; it was not for Ringland, for the place he held in society, it was for himself, I loved him. Had it been far otherwise, had Perceval been poor, overlooked, neglected, I should still have loved him. And now, what are my feelings? Do I love him still? No, I despise, I hold him in contempt; not only for forsaking me, but for the choice he made. Still is he hers? no, no. He does not, he cannot, love Georgina: there may be admiration; her beauty may have caught his eye; but it is impossible Perceval D'Esterre can *love* anything so unformed, so ignorant of life. And yet she was preferred to me; her happiness built upon the wreck of mine!"

"Janet," said Lady Kingsbury, suddenly, "are you attached to Mr. D'Esterre?" Janet paused for a moment; then, in a firm, steady voice, replied—

"No."

"Were you ever attached to him?"

"Never."

"It is well; I am glad to hear it. You know, I always told you he was not sincere, and warned you of the risk you run. I must confess there have been times when, from the inconsistencies of your conduct, I have been led to fear your affections were engaged."

"What inconsistencies?" asked Miss Irving, in rather an alarmed tone.

"I need not remind you of the pleasure you appeared to take in his society, or the encouragement he received from you."

"True," replied Janet; "Mr. D'Esterre's position in the world is such that, had he offered, I should hardly have felt justified in refusing him; but he never possessed my love."

"So you assured me when he left Eastbeach in that abrupt manner, and I then believed you. But I must acknowledge that the agita-

tion you betrayed on first learning Georgina's engagement, together with that sudden illness which prevented your attending the wedding, have raised doubts in my mind. You may have deceived yourself."

"No," answered Janet, firmly, "I was surprised; perhaps, if the truth must be told, a little mortified, to find how easily Mr. D'Esterre transferred his preference to another woman. With regard to my illness, it would have happened precisely the same had I been engaged to go to any other place. I am not immortal, nor can I control my destiny."

"And the earnest wish to postpone our visit; whence does that arise?"

"The D'Esterres are but lately married—hardly out of the honeymoon; circumstances under which people are not, in general, particularly pleasant companions, nor very anxious for additional society."

"Georgina will, however, I am convinced, be glad to see us; and will make every effort to

render you both happy and comfortable while at Ringland," replied Lady Kingsbury, a little nettled by Janet's manner.

"I have no doubt of it."

"And," pursued Lady Kingsbury, "I have heard this assurance of your being heart-whole with very great satisfaction. For, to say nothing of the immorality of such an attachment, it might have interfered materially with your advancement in life. Had I entertained any doubt upon the subject, I could not, with propriety, have suffered you to remain long under the roof with Mr. D'Esterre. As it is, I do it with the most perfect security; and, as this is quite a new field, for you will, of course, meet the first men in the county at his house, you may, perhaps, be as fortunate as Georgina."

"Do you mean to stay long—I thought our visit was limited to two days?" asked Janet, with some anxiety.

"*Mine* is; but there is no occasion for your

leaving Ringland—on the contrary, it is more natural, as well as more eligible, that you should spend some little time with your sister. In my opinion, the house of a young bachelor like Marcus, is not precisely the place for a girl of your age; at least, I think Georgina's preferable—so you will remain with her, and join me on my return to town, when my visit to my son expires."

"That will not be until the middle of next month;" thought Janet. And she cast involuntarily a look of supplication towards her aunt. But Lady Kingsbury's veil was down, it was dusk, she was short-sighted and did not see it: perhaps if she had, she would not much have heeded it, for she was now about to put her long cherished scheme into execution; and having satisfied her conscience by the foregoing interrogation, determined to spare her son the risk of a month's exposure to Miss Irving's attractions and assiduities.

From deference to the memory of her hus-

band, Lady Kingsbury had continued to retain Miss Irving near her; and had given her every advantage and opportunity of securing the grand desideratum of a young lady's existence—a good marriage: but she had never been really partial to her, for, although Lady Kingsbury was certainly far from frank herself, she disliked insincerity in others. She was pleased, also, at seeing young people like young people; and that, even as a girl, Miss Irving had never been. Above all, she did not admire the siege Janet was preparing for Sir Marcus.

Georgina's marriage, however, released Lady Kingsbury from the obligation of keeping Miss Irving always by her side; and it was her ladyship's full intention to make her niece over to the D'Esterres, in great measure, at least; and, until her son married, to avoid having any permanent young lady in the house. When Sir Marcus was safe, one of her nieces should live with her—and, until that time, Janet and the Miss Fitzgroves must take it by turns, to

pay her a visit when she wished for additional society. But, however pleased to find her wishes in so favourable a train, Lady Kingsbury would not have adhered to her present intention, had she been aware of the real state of Janet's affections ; for, although a woman of the world, she was not altogether devoid of feeling, or reckless of consequences ; and had Miss Irving spoken the truth, or, indeed, anything like the truth, she would have been spared an arrangement whose very idea filled her mind with shrinking and repugnance. But the steadiness and pertinacity of her denial removed all her aunt's suspicions ; the evident reluctance with which she acceded to the plan appeared to Lady Kingsbury the result of annoyance at being frustrated in her designs on her son ; it is not altogether surprising, therefore, that the prudent mother persevered in her determination.

Nor was this the only occasion when Janet's duplicity brought its own punishment. Had

she not equally misled her sister, common prudence, to say nothing of higher motives, must have ensured Georgina's rejection of Mr. D'Esterre's addresses. Honesty is the best policy even in this topsy turvy world of ours.

No outbreak of feeling characterised the meeting—Janet was calm—but, in the deep recesses of her heart, how much of evil passion lurked; what pride—and disappointed love which turned to hate—what thirst for vengeance, though the weal of one or both her victims were involved! Georgina had supplanted her—Perceval deceived—and both shall pay the forfeit of her wrong!

Lady Kingsbury talked a good deal, as, indeed, she always did; expressed her sincere pleasure at the marriage, and congratulated both the young people upon their mutual happiness. Janet accosted Perceval with the frank cordiality of a near relation—and embraced Georgina with all the apparent warmth of sisterly affection. D'Esterre was pleased: to

say the truth, he had looked forward with some little trepidation to his first interview with his sister-in-law; for, although he did not believe she had been attached to him, in fact, he did not give her credit for heart enough to be attached to any body, he could not, on considering the business, acquit himself of having paid more attention than he ought to have done; and rather expected some display of resentment on the part of one who had, certainly, a right to consider herself aggrieved. It was therefore much relief to him to perceive that Janet retained no unpleasing recollections; and this manifestation of apparent generosity gave birth in his mind to a sentiment of esteem and admiration for her which he had never entertained before: while Georgina, who had always been strongly attached to Janet—who, surrounded by strangers, was pining for intercourse with her own kindred, greeted her sister with an affection whose intensity must have softened any heart but an envious one.

And what were Janet's feelings? What the workings of her inmost mind? Reader, may you never know them, for they were fiendish; may you never experience the bitter agony, the withering hatred that distorted her fine features, and blackened all her soul, as she paced her chamber on the second evening after their arrival. Perceval was to her an object of contempt—of scorn—a mere weather-cock, who deserved not one single regretting thought. But Georgina, whom she had ever envied, who had been preferred to her in infancy, whose lot had always been more blessed than hers; the younger sister placed above her elder; the unformed country girl supplanting the more finished Belle, winning away the prize she sought to gain! Georgina, always disliked, was now abhorred and loathed! She seated herself before the toilet mirror, and, leaning her chin upon her hands, remained for some time plunged in a chaos of painful and conflicting thoughts; while the heavy tears of rage and

mortification trickled down her flushing cheeks. She glanced her eyes round the apartment; the extreme, even costly, elegance of the furniture gave a keener edge to the hateful passion that overwhelmed and mastered her.

"Yes," she exclaimed, again traversing the room with quick unequal steps, while her eyes gleamed with almost demoniacal fury; "I have been trifled with; I have lavished my affection on an unworthy object; but I could forgive him all his falsehood, his fickleness, his cruel desertion; all, all I could forgive, had he married any one but *her*!"

The next day was spent in going over the house; walking and driving in the grounds. The weather was fine, bright and sunny, and Ringland, even at that season of the year, was a place many would have coveted. The Park, though not extensive, was well stocked with fine old timber; and, from the inequality of the ground, offered more than one spot of romantic beauty. The shrubberies and pleasure

grounds, planned by a first rate *artiste*, maintained at an expenditure far beyond the sum warranted by D'Esterre's income, were, in their way, a perfect specimen of the English garden : but it was the house itself which rendered Ringland superior to the majority of country gentlemen's places. On that Perceval principally prided himself—on that he had spent immense sums of money : and, as far as comfort, convenience, elegance and cheerfulness would go—not, certainly, in vain.

It had been a solid, substantial building, raised by his grandfather, and considerably increased by the present proprietor, who built wings, threw out windows, made a new entrance hall, and contrived to impart an air of elegance to the whole edifice, not often to be seen in English houses. The rooms were spacious, light and gladsome ; the windows looked the right way (which is not always the case ; many houses are so situated as to turn their backs upon the prettiest prospects, and

face the least interesting); the breakfast-parlour opened into a conservatory, and baskets of choice hot-house flowers stood in the hall and sitting-rooms, scattering around their balmy fragrance. The furniture was of the richest description; superb damask fell in thick folds around the plate glass windows: a profusion of sofas, fauteuils, couches and ottomans invited ease and promised rest. Books, elegantly bound and tastefully selected, tempted alike the literary and curious mind. Sevre china, alabaster vases, exquisite paintings, and well-executed casts from antique statues, bore testimony at once to Perceval's taste and extravagance. The foot fell noiselessly on mossy velvet pile carpets; while from vast mirrors, was, on every side, reflected that sight so very gratifying to a pretty woman—her pretty self.

Such was Ringland—and Perceval, elegant, graceful, lively and agreeable, appeared the fitting owner of so fair a place; and this was the

home of which Janet had been bereft by her sister—and that the man who, but for Georgina's artifices, would have been her's. Janet sickened with envy at the magnificence by which her sister was surrounded; and it required all her habitual self-controul to master and conceal the torture she endured—but it was concealed, and Lady Kingsbury departed full of delight and self-complacency, for she arrogated to herself all the credit of Georgina's brilliant marriage; and she rejoiced in the prospect of escaping from the onerous task of continuing to chaperone a girl who did not seem likely to "go off." In 'future the charge would fall principally on Mrs. D'Esterre.

CHAPTER VII.

BUT Janet was not without a measure of consolation. Georgina's début in ——shire had been a failure—Janet's was a perfect triumph. Her easy, yet dignified, manner—her lively, conversational powers—her tact—her taste in dress—her ladylike appearance, rendered her a prodigious favourite with her own sex ; she was not, it is true, so beautiful as Mrs. D'Esterre, nor had she the high patrician look of Lady Alicia Stuart—but she was less haughty than the young Peeress, and her diversified accomplishments threw Georgina completely into the

back ground. With the gentlemen, Janet was not altogether so popular ; she was too artificial a character to please them : for men, excepting in those cases where they are themselves the dupes of individual dissimulation, are keen penetrators of female disposition. Still, as she amused and entertained them, they crowded round her, and Janet's heart beat triumphantly, for she knew that Perceval's eye often rested on her—that always, when she spoke, he was an attentive listener—that his ready smile ever followed her brilliant repartee. Still Perceval was not in love. Janet knew he was not—she did not wish he should be ; for her notion of propriety forbad the idea of such an attachment.

Immorality is not the Englishwoman's fault. We sin more in the way of envy, of detraction, of prejudice, of want of charity. An Englishwoman must be already fallen, indeed, who can, even in thought, tolerate the slightest breach of chastity. Janet did not wish her brother-in-law to fall in love with her—but she wished him not

to love his wife, and she felt that, in proportion as *she* rose in his estimation, Georgina must sink; and to destroy the happiness purchased at the expense of hers—to darken prospects which had eclipsed her own was bliss to Janet's envious mind.

But Miss Irving's estimation in general society was nothing compared with the violent predilection Lady Gertrude conceived for her, almost from the first moment of their meeting. And the feeling was reciprocal; Janet really liked the tiresome old woman, and would gladly spend hours in her society, simply because, as she very soon discovered, Georgina was no favourite with her mother-in-law. Poor Georgina! Everything conspired against her, and nothing more than this mutual partiality. For while pride and prudence prevented Janet from directly prejudicing Perceval against his wife—no such difficulties restricted her intercourse with Lady Gertrude; and she soon became aware that whatever she might think

proper to impart to the old lady would speedily find its way to her son, of course, very much improved by Lady Gertrude's notes and annotations. She learnt, too, from her that D'Esterre's affairs were in much disorder, and reflected with infinite satisfaction that Georgina's brilliant position was not only highly insecure, but that, when the reverse came, it would be rendered more trying by the contrast.

And all this while, Georgina, guileless, warm-hearted, and therefore unsuspicious, clung to Janet in the full trust of sisterly affection; looked up to her as to a being of a superior mould; and, with the frankness of confiding love, imparted every hope, fear and difficulty that she experienced. Amongst the rest, her toilet troubles—Janet listened with eager interest far beyond the attention persons usually bestow when their friends' annoyances are the subject of conversation, for she knew that, in Mr. D'Esterre's circumstances, economy would be her sister's best, and wisest policy. She had

with a prophetic fear that Mrs. D'Esterre would speedily lose even this petty claim to rank, and Miss Irving determined that, as far as her influence would carry weight—this appropriation should be speedily realised.

“Well,” she replied, after hearing Georgy’s account of her embarrassment; “nothing easier and more straight-forward than that path. You are not well dressed; Perceval naturally enough, desires you should behave you to do but to gratify him? Be thankful that, in pleasing Mr. D’Esterre, please yourself; wives are not always so fortunate, you know, Georgy.”

“But, dearest Janet,” replied Georgy, colouring, “I have not the means.”

“Indeed! Is not Mr. D’Esterre liberal?”

"Then remind him."

"I cannot."

"There is not then much confidence between you," thought Janet exultingly. "It is as I suspected—he does not care for her—does not even entertain a passing fancy. What can have made him marry her? caprice, perhaps. But though he does not love her now, his affection may be won; men are as open to flattery as women; and to one so weak and vain as Perceval, how winning the deferential love she feels towards him!" Janet would not have thought thus lightly of D'Esterre's mental powers, had he not shewn himself blind to her attractions.

"You know," pursued Georgina, little guessing what hatred was in Janet's mind, "you know I brought Perceval no fortune whatever, and therefore I feel backward in asking for money merely for myself. Besides, dear Janet, I do not know how it is; Perceval is not, I believe, so rich as we all supposed; or, perhaps, this place is very expensive, but certainly he seldom appears to have much ready money:

even the settlement with the housekeeper sometimes seems to vex him, so that I am quite glad when it is over. Do you know, I often fear Perceval's affairs are not altogether as they ought to be."

"Perceval's tenants are probably backward in paying their rents, and, like other landed proprietors, he has not always ready money at command: but you must not hence infer that he is in debt—nor need you vex and mortify his feelings, I may add, risk his affection, by looking like a tradesman's wife. Nay, do not be displeased; you know I love and admire you more than any one—and therefore it is I speak thus openly. There are different styles of beauty—and yours is one which requires, in fact, will not bear any but, a *recherché* toilet."

"But is Perceval's affection built upon so unstable a basis as the colour or fashion of a dress?"

"Perceval's love, like the love of every other man, rests very much on your appearance; all

men are caught by the eye, as we are won through the ear. There is also something of pride in his wish that you should be well dressed: a man likes to see his wife admired. Perceval was attracted by your beauty."

"I think it was rather my singing;" said Georgina, "at least, you know, he never took much notice of me until after he heard me sing."

"True," replied Janet, "but I question whether he would have been so captivated by your voice, had the lips been less ruby-like, or beautifully formed. And, by-the-bye, talking of music, reminds me to ask why you confine yourself to such simple airs? your compass of voice entitles you to take a much higher range. You should try the Italian school."

"I do not know enough of the science of music."

"Oh, that is of no importance; with your talent it would come almost intuitively."

"I do not think it."

"Try, at any rate; let us practise this duett together; that recitative and air of Bellini's also, that Mrs. Belmont sang the other evening would suit your voice admirably," said Janet; who knew that Georgina, timid, shy, and uninstructed, would never be able to accomplish so difficult a piece; and that nothing would annoy D'Esterre more than a failure of this description. "But we are digressing," resumed Miss Irving; "there is not the slightest occasion for you to teaze your husband by perpetually asking for money to pay your shoe-maker or mantua-maker. Order what you want, and the bills will be sent in, and discharged at Christmas."

"My dear Janet, I could not venture on such a step. I have never been accustomed to have bills."

"Are there not many, very many things in your present situation, to which you were not formerly accustomed?" asked Miss Irving, almost sneeringly. "Besides, it is thus that

all persons of any sort of (I had almost said) respectability, are in the habit of providing for themselves. You do not suppose that Lady Alicia Stuart, or Mrs. Belmont, pay on the spot for every pair of shoes or yard of ribbon they may require. Has Lady Gertrude no bills?"

"But I am not like the people you have mentioned," said Georgina, in a humble tone.

"Your marriage has placed you on an equality, or nearly so, with them; and, in entering a fresh sphere in society, your care should be to conduct yourself in all respects as do the individuals moving in the same circle."

"But had I not better consult Perceval?"

"I should say not. Perceval has expressed his wishes, it is your duty to fulfil them; and, if he dislikes the subject of money matters, why do you bore him with it?"

"Then," said Georgina, "I will write directly to Madame Regrier; and, as the day is fine, we will drive into S——, and purchase

wherewithal to give my fine-lady waiting-woman something to exercise her ingenuity upon. How glad Price will be! I believe she is quite ashamed of my homely appearance."

But it occurred to Janet that any sudden outbreak of this kind might be attributed to her suggestion; she thought proper, therefore, to moderate Georgina's zeal.

"You will be in town so shortly that it almost seems a pity to order things to be sent down. They might not fit, or be such as you would have chosen. S—— does not seem a likely place to furnish anything worth looking at; besides, the spring fashions are as yet undecided. I really would advise your waiting 'until you get to London. But why do you prefer Madame Regnier to Carson?"

"Because she is Lady Gertrude's milliner, and I know Perceval would wish me to employ her."

"You are very attentive to his wishes—quite a model for a wife—a perfect Griselda," said Janet, tauntingly.

"Think, Janet," replied Georgina, rather warmly, "of all I owe Perceval, and then ask yourself whether, to say nothing of affection, I can do less than study his wishes."

"As for your debt to Perceval, I must confess, it does not appear to me so very overwhelming; for I am one of those persons who see no such great obligation in an offer of marriage. When a man proposes to a woman, he does it to please himself, not her."

"It may be so; but I shall always feel that, in choosing one so unworthy of him, Perceval has conferred an obligation which calls for all my affection, love, and gratitude."

Janet said no more; for Georgina was becoming excited, and looked, in consequence, so much more beautiful than usual, that Miss Irving felt it would be unwise to persist in advice that might, perhaps, issue in a result the very reverse from her intention. There was great reason to fear that, if Georgina came forth in the new character she had suggested,

she might prove a thousand times more attractive than at present. Georgina willingly postponed her purchases, but Janet took good care the resolution should not die away.

Lady Kingsbury found the company assembled at Merton Lodge so little to her taste that she abridged her visit, and returned to town; where, as she was tired of being alone, neither of the Miss Fitzgroves being disengaged, she desired Janet to join her. Miss Irving, joyfully obeying the summons, made a long farewell call on Lady Gertrude, and left Ringland with a much lighter heart than she had entered it; for Georgina, married to a man whose affections were not hers, and whose affairs were in disorder—Georgina, placed in a station for which her education and previous mode of life wholly unfitted her; the subject, too, of Lady Gertrude's perpetual unkind strictures, was hardly an object of jealousy.

CHAPTER VIII.

It might be supposed that Janet, satisfied with finding the old adage, "all that glisters is not gold," had proved itself correct in her sister's case, would have foreborne darkening the shadows that were already overspreading a prospect once so fair and promising: on the contrary, her last tête-à-tête interview with Lady Gertrude was spent in still further alienating the old lady's mind from her daughter-in-law. The result was, a note to Perceval from his mother, begging an immediate and private conversation.

“What’s in the wind now?” He said, impatiently, throwing down her ladyship’s note. “What can she want to say to me? Some squabble with her landlord; or, perhaps, a lecture for my extravagance. Well—I shan’t stay long, at any rate; so, Georgy, get on your habit, I shall be back by the time the horses come round.”

Georgina had no great pleasure in riding. True, Perceval had purchased for his bride a very beautiful grey Arabian; but it was spirited—and she a timid rider. As, however, she said nothing of her fears, and it never occurred to Mr. D’Esterre that a born and bred country girl could possibly be otherwise than a good horsewoman, there was seldom a favourable day in which she did not, with trembling, hear a ride proposed; and it was with reluctance now she left the breakfast-room to change her dress. In the hall she met the servant with the letters—one was from Atherley, and its contents speedily put every other idea to flight.

"Well," said Perceval, abruptly entering his mother's sitting-room, and standing before her without removing either hat or gloves. "What's the matter now—has anything happened?"

"I wish to speak to you;" said her ladyship, solemnly.

"About what? Be quick; Georgina is waiting for me, I have not a minute to spare."

"In that case, I had better reserve my communication till you are more at liberty."

"I suppose it's nothing of very great consequence?"

"That is as it may be—people think differently on these subjects. But pray do not let me interfere with Mrs. D'Esterre's wishes—I beg I may not detain you."

Perceval looked towards the window; the sun shone brightly, it was the first fine day they had had for some time, the breaking up of a frost; the roads still hard, though no longer slippery—no wind; in short—the very day for horse exercise, and Perceval was passionately

fond of riding. He thought he would go—Lady Gertrude's communication, whatever it might be, could be just as well listened to on his return. He glanced his eye towards his mother, and she looked so very sour, so exceedingly annoyed, that he resolved to be dutiful, and stay. He drew a chair towards the fire, seated himself, placed his hat upon the ground, laid his gloves therein, and awaited in silence her ladyship's disclosure.

"Perceval," she said, after a grave pause, "although it is painful reverting again to this ill-advised marriage of yours," ('The old story,' thought D'Esterre,) "I wished to speak to you—"

"Well," replied he, impatiently; "and what have you got to say—nothing, I am sure, that I have not heard twenty times before."

"This ill-advised and unfortunate marriage," again began Lady Gertrude.

"Hold," interrupted Perceval, "that my marriage was not altogether prudent, I do not deny; indeed, perhaps, circumstanced as I am,

over head and ears in debt, I ought not to have thought of marrying at all—but that it is unfortunate, or even likely to prove unfortunate, I utterly deny.”

“I am sorry to hear you speak in so light a manner—I should have hoped that no son of mine could have contemplated the probability of his dishonour without anxiety.”

“Dishonour? What are you thinking of—what can you possibly mean?”

“Simply what I have said.”

“Then allow me to observe, I consider the suspicion your words imply both absurd and unfounded. I repose the most perfect confidence in Georgina.”

“The most confiding husbands are not always the happiest.”

“Georgina’s principles, even her ignorance of the world, are a sufficient guarantee, without advertng to the affection——”

“She does *not* feel for you.” (Perceval started.) “Yes—you are astonished, perhaps

even displeased, that I endeavour to open your eyes to the truth. But I have considered the subject much and painfully, and I feel it is my duty to warn you of the danger, and to inform you, that she whom you have honoured by selecting her as your wife—she who now fills the place I once occupied, was, at the time of your proposal, engaged heart and hand to another man, who was discarded to make way for you ; but though discarded, he is not forgotten.”

“Who told you this?”

“I cannot give up my authority ; but it is unquestionable, and confirmed by my own observation.”

“How?”

“To what other source can we trace all this gloom, this lowness of spirits ; the tears, which more than once I, myself, have witnessed?”

“Mother,” said Perceval, “you are not, you never have been, partial to Georgina ; she does not always receive from you the kindness to which my wife might feel herself entitled.”

(Lady Gertrude drew herself up) "I really don't know what degree of attention, court and deference your wife expects from your mother—nor how far she may have abused the immense influence she has over you, to prejudice you against your earliest and best friend."

Now there was nothing in the world D'Esterre dreaded so much as the idea of being under petticoat government: he would not have allowed that he was led by anybody—but least of all by his wife, and he answered truly enough—"Georgina has no such influence, nor will she ever have."

"I am glad to hear it. Even for her own happiness, a wife should be subservient to her husband in all respects," replied Lady Gertrude, who, it was said, had ruled her Lord with no gentle sceptre.

"Have you anything more to say?" asked Perceval.

"Merely this—that, having well considered the danger to which Georgina, young and inex-

perienced, will be exposed during her stay in London, I have determined on postponing my journey to Scotland, and you must make me welcome for a couple or three months in Grosvenor-street. You know, I give no trouble in a house." (Perceval walked to the window, to conceal his excessive vexation) "If," pursued Lady Gertrude, "Miss Irving could have resided with you during the spring, there would have been no necessity for deranging my plans, for I feel the most entire confidence in her prudence and discretion: but that, it seems, is impossible, quite impossible; Lady Kingsbury, who doats upon her niece, will not hear of it." (How very unfortunate, thought Perceval.) "And as it appears to me absolutely necessary Georgina should have some sort of Chaperone, I have resolved on sacrificing my intention."

"My dear mother, you are very kind; but do you think the danger so urgent? under my guidance and watchful care she will surely be safe."

“Under any other circumstances, perhaps, she might : but the gentleman in question is a near relation, a cousin ; one whom you could not shut your doors against. And as I conclude you will not spend your whole life in your wife’s drawing-room, it is quite essential there should be some one to prevent tête-à-tête morning visits.”

“How horribly unlucky,” muttered Perceval, still standing at the window ; “the very thing I married to escape ; if once she gets established in the house, there will be no getting rid of her ;” then added aloud, “but even admitting the truth of your information ; allowing that a less wealthy suitor was sacrificed to me, does it follow that Georgina still cherishes an attachment to him ?”

“Not willingly, perhaps ; but, if there be not something of this nature, why, as I said before, this lowness of spirits—those tears which, when I have come unexpectedly into the room, I have, more than once, seen brushed hastily

away? you do not suppose she is weeping over the wretched home she has left? I understand, from Janet, nothing can exceed the misery and poverty of it. Her father, absolutely distressed for money, and hardly able to give her the common necessities of life. No wonder he caught so readily at your imprudent offer—in fact, you have been fairly taken in by a set of unprincipled needy people. I do not wish to accuse her of anything beyond want of candour; for, in all probability, she is nothing more than a weak tool in the hands of a sordid parent; but, marrying under such circumstances, she, certainly, ought not to have had any concealments from you; and had she been as upright and high principled as you appear to think her, there would have been none:—we must, however, make allowance for the difference of education and general mode of thinking of persons in her class of life.”

“Persons in her class of life? you speak as though my wife were actually one of the lower

orders. Her father is a gentleman, at any rate."

"A very poor one;" rejoined Lady Gertrude, with a sneering laugh.

"I'm not much better myself."

"Ah, that reminds me," said Lady Gertrude, turning over some papers that lay upon the table; "here is a draft for two hundred and seventy pounds which may be of service to you; —Nay, do not refuse, I can easily spare it, or even more. You know, I shall be at no expense for the time I remain with you. I have already contracted for the disposal of the furniture of this house; and, as my carriage would require some extensive repairs, before it could be used for taking a long journey, I have resolved on parting with it at once. Mrs. Belmont wants just such an one, and you must give me a seat in yours up to town, and I can purchase a new one there; if, indeed, I do not decide upon going to Edinburgh by Steam and suiting myself afterwards. So do not think you are robbing me by making use of the loose cash; I have in my banker's hands."

D'Esterre took the bill, for he knew that by refusing he should pain his mother, who, amidst all her failings, was not fond of money; and shortly after, bade her good morning and returned home. He went straight to his private room: upon the table lay several long, wafered, bill-looking letters; but, excepting an exclamation of peevishness, they extracted nothing from him. A drawer was hastily opened, and after turning over several papers that, in much disorder, lay therein, he came to Major Berrington's epistle. It contained, as, perhaps, our reader will remember, a positive denial of any previous attachment on Georgina's part. In short, as it appeared to Perceval, an absolute, most ungentleman-like falsehood.

"The temptation was great, I suppose," he said, mentally; "but nothing could warrant so flagrant, so dishonourable a breach of trust. Had I not positively asked the question, some excuse might be found in his excessive poverty; but, as it is, there can be but one opinion on

the subject—Major Berrington is no gentleman, and his daughter, pshaw, I will not think of her; she is young—she has been sacrificed:—and, by the bye, I suppose she is waiting all this time for me.”

As D'Esterre concluded this soliloquy, he reached the drawing-room, where he found his lady with her dress unchanged, and very evident traces of tears upon her countenance. The sight did not increase his good humour, and, in place of offering enquiry or condolence, he made a hasty observation on her being *unhabited*.

“ Ride!” said Georgina, vacantly, “ oh, true, I forgot; I beg your pardon, I will not be two minutes getting ready.”

“ It is almost too late; the day is changing, we shall have rain, I think.”

Georgina, always glad to escape a ride, thankfully caught at the suggestion, and D'Esterre, mounting his slight, beautiful chesnut, dashed off at a full gallop.

He rode fast and long, and when he again joined Georgina, the shades of evening had fallen around. The shutters were closed, and a bright blazing fire gave to the room that peculiar air of cheerfulness and comfort we find nowhere but in an English house. He placed himself in front of it, and, with his eyes fixed on the flickering flame, continued, in moody silence, to ruminate over his mother's unwelcome communication, and even more unwelcome plan.

Suddenly, Georgina rose, and trembling violently, addressed him thus—"Perceval, dear Perceval, you will think it very strange, very extraordinary, but I have had a letter from my father, and—and—oh I cannot tell you ; it must appear so encroaching, so indelicate, after all your kindness and generosity —" then, unable to continue, she threw herself into a fauteuil, and covered her face with her hands.

"What is the meaning of all this?" enquired Perceval, taking up an open letter that lay on her lap. "May I read it?"

“Oh, yes; pray do.”

Perceval turned towards the blazing fire and began reading.

Major Berrington's dispatch was short, but most unwelcome; he informed his daughter that his difficulties had multiplied, that a sum of three hundred pounds was absolutely necessary to save him from the greatest inconvenience—fifty could be raised amongst his friends at Atherley, but the remainder might be alone attained by parting with his mortgage, which, under present circumstances, could be managed only on such terms as would be absolutely ruinous. He desired his daughter, therefore, to make an application to her husband for a loan of two hundred and fifty pounds, which, with the interest, he hoped to repay by instalments.

Georgina looked anxiously at Perceval whilst he perused the letter; and, observing an unusually grave expression upon his countenance, concluded the application fruitless; and, pictur-

ing to herself her father's disappointment and mortification, could not repress a groan of sorrow. Mr. D'Esterre took two or three turns up and down the room. With the recollection of Major Berrington's imagined falsehood still fresh upon his mind, he felt little disposed to proffer assistance to a man by whom he had been so egregiously misled; but Georgina's distress and agitation found their way to a heart naturally kind and feeling; and, after a few minutes' hesitation, he placed the bill on Lady Gertrude's banker, in her hands.

It had been Perceval's intention to follow up this act of kindness with hinting a hope that similar applications might in future be of rare occurrence; but the expression of joyful surprise, and, still more, the look of gratitude that flashed from Georgina's speaking eyes, effectually cut short his project. In truth, her happiness was excessive; she had worked herself almost into a fever at the idea of making

such an application, and the result, so far exceeding her most sanguine expectations, gave birth to a buoyancy of spirits—a feeling of lightheartedness she had never experienced since her marriage; for she could but see in her husband's readiness to oblige her father, a pledge of the fulfilment of her darling, but almost relinquished wish respecting Major Berrington's residence at Ringland; and, little suspecting how entirely unpalatable such a scheme would prove, in the course of the evening, after again expressing her gratitude, she ventured to broach the idea.

"If," she said, timidly, "my father could be induced to give up that cottage and settle with us, all these difficulties, which now harass and perplex him, would be at an end; and he would be able to repay you both sooner, and with less inconvenience to himself."

"Your father live with us—here—at Ringland?" asked Perceval with mixed horror and


astonishment—"Oh, it is out of the question—absolutely out of the question."

"Indeed, I do not think so. I dare say he would be very unwilling to leave Atherley ; but, with a little persuasion, I am almost certain it might be managed. You know, we might tempt him to pay us a visit, and, once in this beautiful place, he would, I am sure, be so happy, there would be no difficulty in prevailing on him to remain ; and then the debt—"

"Oh, as for that, it is not of the slightest importance ; let your father pay me when and how he likes ; or even not at all, if by any means inconvenient. But his residing with us is quite out of the question."

"I should like very much to see my father," said Georgina, in a saddened tone ; "I am certain he must feel my loss, as much as I do the separation from him."

"There is nothing to prevent your going to Atherley, or your father's coming to see you ; but as to Major Berrington's living here, it is impossible."



Georgina brightened. "Might we not take Atherley in our way to town?"

"You forget that Atherley is about fifty miles further north. And there is another difficulty, my mother will occupy my seat in the chariot."

"Lady Gertrude!"

"Yes; she has invited herself to stay with us for a few weeks previous to her departure for Scotland; it will be a monstrous bore, but, without absolutely affronting her, I really don't see how we can avoid it."

"And she travels with us?"

"Yes; she has sold her carriage, and reckons on a seat in ours."

There was an end of all Georgina's cheerfulness; the prospect of Lady Gertrude for an inmate was so thoroughly distressing; and she sat for some minutes in painful silence.

"How is it, Georgina," said D'Esterre, with a slight touch of peevishness, "that you and my mother get on so badly?"

"Indeed, I cannot tell; Lady Gertrude does not like me."

"You don't understand her; Janet, now, would have managed better, if I had married her, as people were kind enough to say I wanted to do."

"Perceval," said Georgina, quickly, "why did you not marry Janet?"

"Because I liked you better."

"Then you were not refused; at least, I mean—"

"Refused?" replied Perceval, "no, certainly not. I never, for a moment, dreamt of proposing, and that Janet must have known the whole time."

"Poor Janet," thought Georgina, "how you must have deceived yourself! and you did love Perceval; yes, yes, assuredly you were attached to him, or you had not so easily believed that he loved you. And I have supplanted you, my poor, poor Janet—oh, what a claim you have on me—how should your happiness be my first charge!"

Then, still in silence, Georgina planned a thousand schemes, by which she hoped to repair the wrong she had involuntarily inflicted, and further Janet's welfare.

"Do you think," she said, suddenly, "do you think, Perceval, that, where the affections have been once given, it would be easy, or even possible to transfer them to another object?"

"What is your own opinion, Georgina?" answered Perceval.

Georgina hesitated—then, imagining it quite impossible she could ever meet another Perceval D'Esterre, replied, colouring slightly as she spoke—"I do not think it would; at least, not if I may judge by my own feelings."

"Is this simplicity carried to the brink of folly, or hypocrisy, or effrontery?" said Perceval, mentally; for he saw she was speaking experimentally, and he believed she alluded to her love for Maurice Arnold, "or is she guiltless of that love?" The last and true hypothesis was speedily dismissed. He did not

believe that *he* ever had possessed her affections—yet some one had; and everything concurred to point out Arnold as that individual. She was uneducated, but far, very far from being weak; and it was impossible to suppose that one so young could openly avow such sentiments. She was then artful—and sought by an appearance of excessive openness to disarm his suspicions.

This was not an agreeable surmise; and, though D'Esterre hastened to dismiss it from his imagination, as he usually did all unpleasant subjects, yet the false, injurious idea left its taint behind.

Excepting in very early life, favourable impressions of our fellow-creatures are only too readily relinquished; while those of a contrary nature, whether false or true, are all but indelible; so strong is our inclination to judge harshly—so great our tendency to condemn unheard—and yet, what is there more at variance with the spirit of true religion?

CHAPTER IX.

It was the last day of the hunting season—Perceval had joined the sportsmen, and Georgina was in the act of sealing and directing the letter that would convey such welcome intelligence to Major Berrington, when an orange-coloured post-chaise, well laden with trunks and band-boxes, drove up to the door; and, after a good deal of shuffling about in the hall, the tones of a shrill, coarse, but, to Georgina's ears, familiar voice were heard, and in the next moment she was half stifled in Miss Rocket's arms. Then came a sharp, pointed embrace

from Theresa, and an affected one from Belinda, followed by volleys of questions, and exclamations of surprise and joy.

“Why you see,” said Rebecca, at length, “Miss Flagge is obliged to go to town on business, and thought of taking you in her way. Belinda wanted change—and I longed to see how you were getting on—so we joined together in a chaise (you know, my dear, three can travel in a chaise quite as cheap as by the stage) and here we are.”

It was well Perceval was not at home to witness the arrival, or the ready appetite with which the newly imported ladies assailed the well spread luncheon table; he did not, indeed, return at all that day; and, to say the truth, Georgina was not altogether sorry, when a note from him, announcing his having accepted Lord Cotswold's invitation to dine and sleep at Hartingfield, was put into her hands; she had so much to ask about, so many enquiries to make, she was glad of an evening of unre-

strained intercourse with her friends. She hoped, too, that the exuberance of their admiration of Ringland would thus have time to sober down. In truth, that admiration was very overwhelming. The beauty, comfort, elegance so visible throughout the place—the number and good training of the domestics—above all, Perceval's generosity towards Major Berrington, quite surpassed the notions of the country born and bred spinsters; even Rebecca declared her willingness to enter the wedded life, could she meet with a Perceval D'Esterre: and warm and frequent were the congratulations Georgina received on her amazing good fortune. How little did they suspect the real truth!

“Well, Miss Flagge, we shall have a pleasant drive to day,” said Rebecca, on the morning after this arrival, as she put the finishing stroke to her out-of-doors toilet, by drawing on a pair of new dark green leather gloves. “But, Georgina, why are you not ready? The carriage has driven round—I'm sure Mr.

D'Esterre isn't like other men, if he chuses to have his horses kept waiting."

Georgina pleaded letter writing, a visit to Lady Gertrude, an engagement, in excuse for not accompanying them. The fact was, there was no room—Rebecca quickly saw the reason, and insisted that Belinda should remain at home. But Belinda submitted with an ill grace—Georgina still persisted, and Miss Flagge entreated to be allowed to stay behind—and thus for twenty minutes the matter was debated, and finally settled, as most debated subjects are, to the entire satisfaction of no one.

Perceval, though in a very different manner, had spent an evening entirely to his heart's content. A small knot of exclusives, of the very first water, were assembled at Hartingfield; the sort of persons with whom he had associated during the period of his fashionable reign. They were talented as well as exclusive—Lady Cotswold was all condescension, her daughter all grace and fascination; and D'Esterre, freed

from a kind of vague uneasiness, he usually experienced on Georgina's account when they were in public together, delighted at finding himself once more in the society he prized, gave himself up to the enjoyment of the moment; and for the time forgot every vexation—his debts—his mother's projected visit—even his wife—a slip of the memory (by the bye) not unusual with married gentlemen.

The next day proved very mild, and sweet, and spring-like. Lady Alicia Stuart declared her intention of riding, she had an errand of infinite importance in the town through which Perceval must pass to return home; and, accompanied by Sir Allan Stuart and Lord Olivius Yerfourd (the satirical cousin), they set off. Arrived at the shop, where lay Lady Alicia's business, she dismounted and entered the house, while the three gentlemen remained standing round the door discoursing about horses; which was all quite natural, seeing they were of the masculine gender, and that before

glancing eye, his arching neck, and mane—his glossy skin, and prancing coquettish gait, so full of grace and consciousness of power. To my mind, a thorough high mettled horse, is like a beautiful woman.

“By the way, Sir Allan,” said the gentleman who had joined the coterie, “I know Webster has on sale one of the best hacks I have ever seen—bay with black points—just the thing to suit you.”

“Ay?” said Sir Allan Stuart, who was a little horse-mad.

“Yes; and it belonged to a friend of mine who is going abroad. If you feel like taking a look at it, I’ll step over with you to Webster’s.”

he should overtake her, in case he was not returned by the time her ladyship's business was concluded, proceeded to that favourite place of man's resort, the stable.

Perceval watched their disappearance, and, then turning his head in the contrary direction, saw, with mingled feelings of surprise and horror, his well appointed, fashionable chariot making its way through the street with three females laughing and talking within, and on the box, side by side with the coachman, the beautiful Belinda, attired in a pea green silk pelisse and pink bonnet. Who all these women were Perceval could not tell; he had a faint recollection of having seen before the stoutest and most obnoxious looking; but that they were Georgina's friends, perhaps even relations, admitted little doubt—very dear ones, too, to judge by her extremely happy countenance. Perceval thought that in his whole life he had never seen such a collection of quizzes; and, full of terror lest they should recognise him, he made a pre-

... appeared, who prece
appear to have noticed them:
trusted that, as it was already
going straight home, and thus,
escape observation.

But his anxieties were not to e
Lady Alicia was again seated
the habit duly arranged, the a
whip in one hand, and the silken
balanced in the other—she glanc
deep blue sky, enquired the h
passing a remark on the beauty of
avowed her intention of prolong
They might, she said, proceed
on the turnpike road, and then re
the bye lanes; and at once lengt
sion, and avoid the monotony of

lane, Lady Alicia Stuart must pass the Lodge of Ringland, which was near, although not absolutely upon, the turnpike road : there was, therefore, every risk of their overtaking the carriage, and her ladyship could hardly have proposed anything more unpalatable to Mr. D'Esterre. Beyond, however, expressing his apprehension that the lane might be in an unfavourable state for riding, he, in common politeness, could not even hint his disapprobation of a scheme that secured him the continuance of her ladyship's society ; and this fear was speedily overruled. Two days before, very unluckily, Lady Alicia had made trial of the lane, and found it quite passable—there was nothing more to be said, Perceval was forced to appear delighted ; he could only hope that, as Lady Alicia was so bent on prolonging her ride, she would not hurry over the ground, and for this purpose he used every exertion, laid all his mental powers under contribution, to make the conversation too agreeable to be interrupted or

was gay and entertaining she continued walking her nearly gained the point where the roads took place ; but the going was so rough and steep, and Lady A. was so much under the temptation of an easy equestrian, that she was in all probability, than any of Perceval's stirrups gave behind to right it, and, when the road brought him in his companion, she was alone on her horse checked, and her attention attracted by some not distant object.

"Mr. D'Esterre," she cried, "I have had an accident—a carriage accident—yours—I trust no serious

fearful of increasing the confusion, and can be of no use—pray ride on.”

Perceval looked forward; midway down the hill, he beheld his carriage completely overturned and lying on its side. The traces were cut, the horses' heads held by two countrymen, while the coachman and Lord Olivius Yerfoud were busying themselves in extricating the inmates of the fallen vehicle. He required no second bidding, but, followed by his groom, galloped to the spot, where a crowd of ragamuffin boys had already collected. No one was hurt—even the carriage seemed to have escaped material injury—but the disaster, happening when and where it did, was vexatious to the last degree. Upset carriages have always been part of the machinery of fictitious narrative, but notwithstanding this, upset carriages are not picturesque looking things; and, although it is not an uncommon practise to date the dawn of mutual affection from such an event, I do aver that, to make one's exit with propriety from the

door of a carriage lying on its side, requires Taglioni's grace.

Georgina came first to hand, and, being young and active, reached terra firma without further *eccentricity* than that of displaying an inch or two more of her well turned ankle than she was in the habit of doing. Theresa also, light as a feather, was lifted out, and placed upon the ground without any particular mischance — but Rebecca, poor, fat Rebecca—it really seemed as if nothing would dislodge Rebecca! At one moment she was seen to emerge as far down as the waist, then, a total disappearance would take place ; at another the crushed bonnet and swollen countenance were all that could be brought to view ; while the exclamations of those who tugged and pulled, and the stifled groans of the victim, added to her entreaties that “they would not pinch her so,” sufficiently disclosed what a work of difficulty it was to all parties.

“Hang me, if I think anything but a lever

will drag her up," thought Perceval, as, in utter despair, he gave up the attempt, and relinquished his place to a sturdy farmer, who came from one of the neighbouring fields, to proffer assistance; and, after a few more hearty jerks and tugs, the weighty matter was effected; and Rebecca, half fainting, hot, tumbled and irritated, was finally placed upon her feet.

Precisely at this juncture Sir Allan and Lady Alicia Stuart rode up, and poured forth a multitude of enquiries and congratulations on their fortunate escape, which Georgina, who, despite the cloud upon her husband's brow, felt very much inclined to laugh, answered gaily enough.

"Fortunate!" muttered Rebecca, trying to put her bonnet straight; "I cannot say I see much good luck in the business. The carriage is scratched all over; and, as for me, I'm beaten and bruised to a mummy—and," added she, looking about, "what in the world has become of Belinda?"

“May so be,” at last said a dirty
a boy, “the young lady lying in
yonder is she you’re a looking for.”

Lord Olivius Yerfourd darted for
discovered the fair one lying on her
not, however, senseless, as, *selon les*
ought to have been; nor even d
motion—for, on the said cow-boy’s la
an unceremonious, and certainly dirty
her shoulder, she started—and, pre
hand to Lord Olivius Yerfourd, regain
without further difficulty, nor were h
silence and immobility satisfactoril
for.

“Well,” said Miss Rocket, as she
clinging to Lord Olivius Yerfourd
told you it was a very foolish plan.

All eyes were immediately directed towards Miss Arnold, whose dress bore unequivocal marks of her late watery bed; and a coarse laugh from the rustics, a titter from Theresa, and a smile of peculiar amusement from the Cotswold party, greeted Perceval's vexed eyes and ears.

To conceal his annoyance, he turned to the coachman, and said, sharply, "How, in the world, did all this happen? How did you contrive to overturn the carriage? You deserve to lose your place for your awkwardness."

"'Tis an ugly job, sure enough, sir," replied the coachman, in a surly tone, "but 'twas n't altogether my fault, neither—nor, if every body had their due, I don't think 'twas my fault, at all; because, d'ye see, sir, 'twas all along of Miss *Harnold*; and so 'twould be a very hard case to take the bread out of my mouth for what I could'n't help by no manner of means."

"Well, but how did it happen?" again enquired his master.

would'nt be convinced, and i
just as we come to the top of t
hopped across the road and sta
and the off *un* shyed a bit,
lady, she screeched out and cat
arm, and that jerked the reins
them more, and they set off :
and, before I had time to pul
hind wheel took the mile-stor
upset; but nobody's hurt, and I
carriage will be much the wor
your honour won't think of tu
servant, when he hasn't been to

“ Can I do nothing for you,
I should be so happy to be of
enquired Lady Alicia Stuart o
having gratified her curiosity for

"Nothing, I thank you," said Georgina.

"Could we not leave a message at your lodge? Pray make us useful, suffer me to desire another carriage to be sent down."

Now, excepting a Britska, which was under repair, the D'Esterres had no other carriage; neither had they more than one pair of carriage-horses. Independent of this, however, the distance was too inconsiderable to render any conveyance necessary. Lady Alicia's officious offer was therefore politely declined, so, bowing gracefully, she and Sir Allan Stuart, who, better bred than his wife, had already made several attempts to induce her to depart, rode off.

Lord Olivius Yerfourd, however, remained, for the ostensible purpose of escorting the ladies, but, in reality, because the whole scene had afforded him far too much entertainment to be easily abandoned: calling out, therefore, to his party that he would overtake them, he desired Mr. D'Esterre's groom to lead his

horse, and offered an arm to Georgina and her cousin. Perceval could not do less by the elder ladies, although, in truth, he would much rather have stayed behind to superintend the raising of the carriage; and thus they proceeded towards Ringland, Belinda's wetted pelisse and bonnet appearing to singular advantage as she walked in front, and adding considerably to her aunt's very unusual ill-humour.

Perceval's late feelings were not improved by the glimpse he occasionally caught of the countenances of those who were in advance; Georgina, far from sympathising with him, was evidently very much amused; Belinda, hanging upon Lord Olivius Yerfourd's arm, was looking up in his face with a sort of languid affectation, which, although at another time D'Esterre would have termed ridiculous, he now thought absolutely disgusting; whilst the sarcastic smile that played around Lord Olivius Yerfourd's mouth very plainly indicated what were his sources of merriment.

For some time, D'Esterre and his companions pursued their way in silence; Rebecca was too cross, Theresa too shy, and D'Esterre too angry, for conversation—nor may we marvel. Theresa possessed a sensitive mind; she had sufficient tact to perceive that she and her party were not altogether welcome to the owner of Ringland. She saw the wide difference of station between herself and those with whom, for the first time in her life, she was associating, and felt out of place. Shy, poor, and nobody; she had been thrown in contact with the rich and high-born, and by them was looked upon as an intruder, or made the object of their contemptuous mirth. Then, for Rebecca's discomposure—to say nothing of the damage to Belinda's wardrobe, there are, believe me, few ladies of her weight and years who would have undergone all she had done with perfect equanimity. And as for Perceval, the fastidious Perceval, whose aristocratic arms almost felt themselves polluted by their present office—

who may wonder that his brow should be darkened, when all his feelings had been so severely shocked; or, that he should regard his fair encumbrances almost with disgust, when he reflected what an admirable caricature would, ere long, grace his noble kinswoman's album, by way of illustration, to the capital story Lord Olivius Yerfourd would, undoubtedly, make of the disastrous affair. Besides, here was a confirmation of Lady Gertrude's predictions; and, to say the truth, his own occasional fears—an invasion of Ringland by his wife's vulgar relations: and, since they came in so unceremonious a manner, of course they would make themselves completely at home—do what they liked—go where they liked—and, worse than all—stay while they liked.

At length, Theresa, thinking common courtesy required some attempt at conversation, made the usual English reference to the weather, and expressed a fear lest they should have rain. Perceval looked up, and his vexation

rather increased ; for he could not help reflecting that, had the clouds, which now appeared sufficiently threatening to justify the apprehension, but overspread the heavens an hour or two earlier, Lady Alicia Stuart would not have been induced to extend her ride, and much of his present discomfort must have been spared.

“Aye,” exclaimed Miss Rocket, “it does look like rain, very like rain. I dare say it will rain, we only want a regular pelting shower to complete our good fortune. Not that I think it would do Belinda much harm, for perhaps if she got a thorough soaking, it would wash out the stains in her pelisse, and it might come out the same colour all over, instead of looking like a great cucumber, dark green on one side, and light on the other.”

“Belinda has been very unlucky, but indeed, my dear friend, you should not dwell so much upon a mere trifle, such as spoiling a dress : remember how much worse it might have been—even life was endangered.”

“Trifle! Humph,” replied Rebecca, in a loud voice; “I can tell you it’s no such trifle to have a new silk pelisse spoilt in this manner: she ought not to have put it on—I told her so—but, like all other young people, she ’s so obstinate, you might as well attempt to boil eggs in the sea as make her change her mind. Well—he’ll be a happy man that gets her for his wife—that’s all I can say.”

“Is the season as forward with you, as with us?” enquired Mr. D’Esterre, by way of stopping Rebecca; while, at the same time, he endeavoured to moderate the pace of his companions, so as to interpose the longest possible distance between them and the others.

“Yes—no; I can hardly say, but perhaps we are a little forwarder—not much certainly.”

They had now reached the lodge, where Belinda, anxious to prolong the walk, thought proper to make a dead stop, and expatiate on the beauty of the grounds, and the exquisite order in which they were kept; concluding with

the novel remark, that spring is a beautiful season.

"Yes;" replied Miss Rocket, "it's all well enough—but do go on, Belinda; you ought to get rid of your wet clothes, instead of standing here gaping like a great green goose!"

"Yes," rejoined Theresa, in answer to Belinda's observation. "Spring is a beautiful season, and yet it always makes me melancholy."

"I never knew anything that did *not*," said Rebecca: "melancholy is the turn of your mind."

"It is the turn of almost all reflecting minds," remarked Perceval, softening towards his smaller and less offensive companion.

"What is that very picturesque ruin?" enquired she, after a brief silence.

"That is Pembril Castle."

"Pembril Castle. Oh, I have heard much of Pembril Castle—Lord Cotswold's, I believe?"

"Yes, it belongs to him; and those are his grounds," replied Mr. D'Esterre.

"I believe so," said Perceval however, that neither Miss Fla her party should see more of Per Georgina's sketch. "Are you

"Passionately."

"Then you must gratify me very picturesque old well and grace my park—there is a ledge to that spot which I will tell you that is to say, if, during your we are favoured with a day for 'the haunted well' is on foot, and not always so," saying to gain some information departure.

"I shall enjoy it of all things
Thomson enthusiastically

The sentimental vein in Theresa's mind was all awakened by the idea of a visit to the haunted well. "The difficulties of the access will serve to render the spot more attractive to me; and, if the road be all you describe, I shall but see in it a true emblem of human life, which, to me at least, will never, I fear, be either smooth or straight."

"Don't you think, Miss Flagge, an iron would make it right?" asked Miss Rocket, intent only on Belinda's bonnet.

"An iron?"

"Yes; an iron—not too hot, and very carefully managed, might, really, I think, do some good."

"My dear friend, how your mind runs on that disaster."

"And enough to make it: just look what a figure she is with that great lump of mud sticking between her shoulders," said Rebecca; then, disengaging her arm from Mr. D'Esterre's, she limped forward, and, having reached her

ruption to the tender flirtation
on with Lord Olivius Yerfou
begged her aunt to let her
resa, in a small, shrill voice
Rocket that, if she removed
was quite dry, the stain would
times worse than before.

“True, enough;” answered
lieve it is a hopeless case, and
left alone.”

She did not, however, relax
but continued walking in a
go one step by her niece’s side
had been slightly strained, and
painful and stiff. In this manner
the house; and, while Miss I
self upon one of the hall chairs

lest Georgina should gratify him. But, as a spontaneous invitation was a stretch of her prerogative Georgina never ventured, Lord Olivius Yerfourd would have been disappointed, had not Belinda, whose anxiety on the subject, equalled, or, perhaps, exceeded, his own, suddenly pointed to a few straggling drops of rain, which were, she was certain, the forerunners of a dreadful storm. Perceval thought the weather looked more favourable than it had done an hour before, and Rebecca, vexed at her niece's folly, coincided with him; but his lordship, of course, was confident there would be rain; and as, unfortunately, a few more spots appeared upon the steps, D'Esterre could do nothing but proffer the much-wished-for invitation; and, in order to shorten as much as possible the intercourse between his dissimilar, but equally unwelcome, guests, carried off the young nobleman on pretence of consulting him respecting some improvements; and kept him loitering about until it was time to dress for dinner.

CHAPTER

"GEORGINA," said Miss Art
cousin's dressing-room, "I'm
to ask the loan of some art
my head."

"Artificial flowers?"

"Yes. What can you lend
my dress; and, I should prefer
I think, more classical, and v
most."

"I have no great variety, but
disposal. Price will show you

"My dear Belinda, we expect no company—we are nothing but a family party."

"You forget Lord Olivius Yerfourd," said Belinda, walking over towards the Wardrobe, on one of whose shelves lay Georgina's scanty supply of artificial flowers, and, possessing herself of a wreath composed of blue non-descripts, with gold leaves, one of Janet's presents.

"This will do, admirably," remarked Miss Arnold.

"Oh, do not wear that," cried Georgina, as Belinda placed the wreath, and began arranging her snaky curls with much apparent complacency; "pray do not wear that—I assure you it would be considered downright vulgar."

"My taste in dress has never yet been disputed," drily observed Belinda.

"Lord Olivius Yerfourd hates blue flowers, he says they are so entirely out of nature."

"Besides, Miss Arnold, that wreath is quite faded; I wouldn't recommend it, I wouldn't, indeed," said Mrs. Price, who thought it high

"Indeed," rejoined Georgin
advise, nothing. You have no
it is to be over-dressed."

"Mean and envious;" mutt
she left the room, and repai
apartment, where she occupied
up some rosettes of narrow sa
together with the difficulty
in fastening her dress, detained
she was the last person
drawing-room. Perceval had
and he watched the entreés
individuals with some little
altogether, the result was n
anticipated. Miss Rocket,
gros de Naples, her usually br
restrained by the difficulty s

and modest, as she always was. The conversation, too, supported principally by himself, Theresa, and Lord Olivius Yerfourd, sensible and lively. Perceval was beginning to breathe freely, and to forget how very obnoxious a party had taken possession of his house, when the door opened—and Belinda, in a blue satin dress, black stuff shoes, coral necklace and York-tan long gloves, entered. The satin bows figured in her sandy hair; and a white paper fan, of no trifling dimensions, graced her hands. Perceval took one glance—then turned away.

“A capital addition for Lady Alicia Stuart’s album!” he exclaimed, mentally; and while with a sickening feeling of disgust he thought of the effect such an exhibition of vulgar finery must produce upon his aristocratic visiter, if he did not wish Belinda back in the ditch again, he would, certainly, have been better pleased, had she considered it more prudent to keep her room for fear of cold. And as, in this world, we usually suffer for the follies of our relations

and connexions, Rebecca was handed to the dinner-table with hardly common civility.

After dinner, the leading news of the day was alluded to ; of this, neither Rebecca nor Theresa knew much ; then politics were introduced, of which they understood still less : at length, the conversation took a literary turn ; here, at any rate, Theresa found herself at home, and she occasionally surprised Mr. D'Esterre by the depth and acuteness of the observations which escaped her. She had been in the school of suffering, that only school where woman learns to know her fellows.

They spoke of the historians, the poets, the novelists of the day : then of that mighty master mind, who was all three, who had so many imitators, and yet stands, and probably will ever stand, pre - eminently alone. Perceval admired and criticised by turns ; Theresa, on whom all the difficulties of authorship were just now pressing with peculiar force, hinted a suspicion that something of Sir Walter Scott's

astonishing celebrity might, perhaps, be traced to his connexion with the trade; which Rebecca, an amazing admirer of the great unknown, because his writings contained so few love scenes, stoutly denied; but all agreed that such a man again they ne'er should see.

All this time, Lord Olivius Yerfourd was talking the most arrant nonsense to Miss Arnold, who listened with ecstatic delight, fully convinced she had at last captivated "a real Lord." Oh, how her heart beat, and her cheek glowed, and her eyes twinkled — and what visions of grandeur flashed upon her mind; and when he summed up all his rhapsodies with some allusion to Pope's *Belinda*, and avowed his intention of emulating her adventurous admirer, and thus gain possession of a ringlet of her hair, so great was her enchantment that, drawing on her York tan glove with more strength than caution, it split across the back with a loud cracking noise, and displayed to full advantage the hand within, looking

rooming-

"There!" cried Miss Rockside of the table.

Belinda cast a look of defiance and placed her hand on her hip with her pocket-handkerchief, blushing for her vulgarity, leaving the dining-room.

"Well, Belinda," said he, "to be in the humour for sport to-day—pelisse, bonnet, gloves goes on much longer, you've hurt your back by the time—by-the-way, what induced you to figure of yourself? I protest like a rainbow walking about, I saw such a mixture of colours."

—yellow gloves. c

Belinda, too much elated by her new conquest to heed either stricture or advice, walked across the room, and, placing herself at the piano, began singing, in a sharp, nasal tone, a French romance, neither much known nor admired, but considered by her peculiarly applicable to the occasion, because it began

“Olivier, je t’attends.”

The delicate-mannered damsel did not wait; Perceval was in no humour to play the agreeable, and Lord Olivius Yerfourd speedily transferred himself to the drawing-room; where, after an ineffectual attempt to engage Georgina in a trifling conversation, he placed himself by her enraptured cousin; who, led on by his ridiculous flattery, continued singing sentimental ballads and romances, until Perceval’s fine musical ear and correct taste were tortured nearly to agony point, and he thought he must have left the room to escape from Miss Belinda’s screaming. He was saved by an explosion from Miss Rocket.

linda, with marked emphasis she had previously begged to be her second in a duett, was placed upon the music desk.

"We have had music enough," observed Perceval, tired by the excessive state of excitement that had been put into.

"No;" rejoined Miss Truth, "than good breeding music at all; there has been singing, and noise, and nonsense of music; so Georgina, by singing your father's and only that one, I will not as and Lord Olivius Yersford distance to go."

had chosen the air our heroine sung, at her father's instance, the evening previous to her marriage, and now repeated, in presence of those who had so often listened before, her thoughts reverted to old times—her ear lost its accuracy—her voice its power. Perceval, too, remembered that evening, and, full of vexation and annoyance, regretted he had not even then broken off the engagement. But vain were such regrets—he had connected himself, irrevocably connected himself, with a set of low-born people—he had married a woman with a whole host of vulgar relations, and who, in the irritation of his present feelings, herself appeared but one degree less vulgar and ill-bred.

But the next moment D'Esterre thought differently. Lord Olivius Yerfourd, as Georgina concluded, addressed to her one of the absurd sallies which had so much enchanted her foolish cousin, and the modest dignity that marked her manner, as she repelled this impertinence, struck even her fanciful, fastidious husband, who saw

and understood, although too far off to hear, what passed.

"No, no," he said mentally; "whatever they may be, *she* is not vulgar—far from it. Georgina is a beautiful creature, even graceful and elegant; and if she could but be separated from these odious relations—and time will do that—time does everything."

Lord Olivius Yerfourd turned towards a stand of flowers, and, breaking off a rose, offered it to Belinda. She placed it affectedly in her bosom.

"Do you know those lines, beginning 'Beauty crept into a rose?'" she enquired of Lord Olivius.

"No, I have never seen them; whose are they?"

"Shakspeare's, I believe."

"Shakspeare! Oh no," said Perceval, "those lines are not Shakspeare's."

"Then," replied Belinda, "perhaps, they are Moore's."

"Hardly;" observed Theresa; "they are of older date; and by a mind of a very different stamp—you are also wrong in quoting that line as the first; it occurs towards the middle of the verses."

"Whoever be the author, the idea is pretty," remarked D'Esterre.

"Yes," rejoined Lord Olivins, "beauty's resting place should be the sweetest and the softest."

Belinda fancied this remark contained a compliment to her, and, with an air of silly consciousness, answered—

"Don't you doat upon roses, Lord Olivins? Oh I'm sure you do—poets are all so fond of roses."

"I am not a poet."

"Oh, yes you are; I am confident you are—you look like one."

"Do I?" he enquired, smiling. "And may I ask what peculiarity marks the outward bearing of the poet, so that you may distinguish him from other men?"

poet, I suppose," replied Be
self exceedingly like a fool.
have all the same tastes—do
and nightingales, and roses.'

"Yes," exclaimed Miss
creeps into a rose—love n
Philomel delights in roses.
them well enough, particul
still, I must confess, I never
a rose but earwigs." An
herself of this observatio
towards the piano, and
turning over the leaves of
the same time humming,

"I'd be a But

so very audibly, that Per
hensive she meditated con

Yerfourd shewed tokens of an intended departure. In taking leave, however, he intimated his hope of paying a visit of enquiry on the following day; and, the ladies having retired, Perceval remained in the drawing-room, brooding over his annoyances, and planning a *lionising* excursion, that might ensure the absence of his guests from home, at the time the threatened visit was likely to take place.

CHAPTER

SHORTLY after Georgina had
of unrobing, Belinda, looking
entered her dressing-room, &
low tone of voice, begged
Mrs. Price's services might
as she wished to consult her
of the most vital importance

"Certainly," replied Ge
may go—I shall want n
night."

ever, without, according to the common custom of waiting women, pausing for a few minutes outside the door, which was closed as lightly as might be. But her curiosity was not gratified, for no sound reached her well practised ear; Georgina brushed the long glossy ringlets, that now floated on her shoulders, while silently awaiting the important communication Belinda had announced, but which for some minutes she seemed unable to disclose. At length she exclaimed in those heroic tones she was in the habit of assuming when she wished to be unusually interesting—

“Georgina, my sweet Georgina, how great is your happiness!”

“Yes,” said Georgina, rather dryly, “I have many blessings—I ought to be very happy.”

“Yes, yes, surrounded by luxury, married to the Lord of your affection—adored by him—what an enviable lot is yours!”

Georgina made no reply: for, although Belinda’s two first assertions were correct, with

"On," pursued Henry, "almost put the candle out, held out a promise of equalling alas, alas, disappointed love is look to!"

"What do you mean? Has he

"Do not mention him," cried a look of disgust, "he is unworthy of man, a disgrace to the whole

Georgina's dark eyes opened in astonishment. "How? What?" seemed much pleased with him: "tells me he has been a good friend since I left it—on your account,

"Oh, yes; he has been thoughtful much; and, I blush to own that his presence was not unacceptable

rather alarmed at Belinda's excited tone and manner.

"Before I knew what the wretch is, what he is capable of, the cruel part he meant to act by the miserable Belinda!"

"What part? What has he done, my dear cousin? Belinda, do, do explain, you quite terrify me."

"Georgina," said Belinda, with the utmost solemnity; "I will own every thing! yes, I will confide all my misery, my weakness, for you will soothe and sympathise, I know."

"Pray, make haste," said Georgina, "it is very late."

But Belinda resembled a German postillion, there was no getting her on.

"You know," replied Belinda, "that we met, first, in town, and he appeared all devotion; he followed me to Boulogne, afterwards to Atherley, and then persisted in the same course, notwithstanding the discouragement he met with."

was weak, and ne wicked.
tinely ; and—and—in short
inveigle me into an engagen

“ An engagement of mar

“ Yes, the villain practi
ings : nor was it until I w
that I discovered how g
deceived.”

“ What can you mean ? ”

“ Oh, Georgina, this Pr
not what I believed him, hor
and everything. a woman v
is a—a—”

“ A married man, perha
perplexed Georgina.

“ No, Georgy, not a marr
a—fishmonger ! ”

"Don't say the horrid word so often."

"But is he really one?"

"Yes, the audacious creature is actually a fishmonger!"

"And, do you mean that he keeps a shop, and sells cods-heads and shoulders?"

Belinda was too much offended to reply; and Georgina, amused at this conclusion to Belinda's romantic views, could not forbear adding, "If he be really a fishmonger, his name should be *Spratt*, not Pratt."

"Do not insult me," said her cousin; "had you been forced to become a fishmonger's wife, instead of Mr. D'Esterre's, you would not have thought it any laughing matter."

"But," rejoined Georgina, recovering her gravity, for it really was no subject for a joke; "you are not, surely, serious, when you talk of marrying Mr. Pratt."

"Indeed, I am, perfectly in earnest; I see no possibility of escaping my dreadful fate."

"Is the engagement irrevocable?"

... hate ...

" Yes ; hate, loathe, dete

" But you used to rave, I never cared half so much before we were married, as for Mr. Pratt."

" Yes ; but that was because he was a fishmonger."

" Surely, Mr. Pratt will not be adhering to the engagements he wishes ?"

" He does, he does. My indignation, I desired him to leave me for ever, the audacious wretch, of my promise, and, when nothing should induce me to be enticed to sue me for a bruise."

a breach of promise of marriage by a fish-monger!"

"He will not do it, my dear Bell, rely upon it; the threat will not be acted upon. Such things are never done."

"Oh, yes, they are, in to-day's paper there was an account of an action of the kind; Lord Olivius Yerfourd and Mr. D'Esterre began talking about it just before the former went away, and turned the poor girl into such ridicule. I declare, I got so hot I thought I should have fainted."

"But that was quite another case; there, the lady, whoever she was, sued the gentleman—men never prosecute in such cases."

"Pratt will," said Belinda, sullenly. "He says he has taken a house and furnished it, and told his friends, and that he won't be made a fool of."

"Have you consulted anybody?"

"No; the dreadful secret rests with you."

"Why was there so much mystery?"

“ And yet he has told hi

“ Oh, that was quite late
father's consent, published
wrote to me to do the same
time I had received an an
roused my suspicions ; I d
he came to Atherley, we n
behind the orchard, and
dreadful truth.”

“ How does it happen ;
Mr. Pratt's low origin? I
his language would have be

“ Oh, he has been well e
was at Winchester on the
went to college, for his fa
the law ; but he got into a
called and the

delay. It is the mystery and secrecy with which you have been induced to act that has led to the entanglement; had there been no concealment, on your part, there would have been no deception on his; his trade and connexions must have been discovered, and probably this it was that induced him to bind you to silence."

"You are a poor comforter, Georgina."

"Maurice will prove a more efficient one: entrust him with your distress without delay."

"I dare not."

"Nay; he is so kind and affectionate, and has always proved himself the best of brothers."

"I cannot; he would be so angry with me for meeting Pratt privately."

"Even if he were, what is a temporary burst of displeasure compared with an unhappy and unsuitable connexion?"

"But I promised Maurice to discourage Gustavus. I denied that I ever met him alone,

shocked at Belinda's dup
proper feeling and decorum

"It is, indeed, a hard fa
bestow my hand upon a fis
quite clear I might marry
fifteen hundred a year, ar
berwell, compared to be
Yerfourd?"

"My dear Belinda, there
chance of your ever being
fourd, there is not, indeed."

"You say so," observed
"because you think no on
make an advantageous matc
reason for knowing the cont
remark with what alacrity h
the—the stream;" (Belinda

morrow—what are they but tokens and evidences of his fervent attachment?”

“Whatever Lord Olivius Yerfourd’s feelings may be,” replied Georgina, well aware that, if once Belinda fancied she had made a conquest, the endeavour to persuade her to the contrary was perfectly hopeless, “I am quite certain he has not the remotest intention of making you his wife. He is, it is well known, over head and ears in debt, and can only marry a woman of fortune; so pray do not suffer your mind to cherish any such foolish expectations.”

“There is Mr. D’Esterre,” said Belinda, coldly; “may I entreat you will not betray my secret?”

“Of course, I will be strictly honourable,” replied Georgina; and she kept her promise with more fidelity than is generally the custom with married ladies. To say the truth, there was little temptation to do otherwise; for, in addition to the want of confidence

always existing between her and her lord, Perceval was in no humour to invite disclosures. All men have a dislike to female closettings, and his objection was not diminished by the reflection that the interesting creature, *en bonnet de nuit*, whom he saw issue from Georgina's dressing-room, was one of Maurice Arnold's sisters.

CHAPTER XII.

THE following day proved sufficiently fine for the expedition Mr. D'Esterre had planned, but it was not destined to take place. Theresa, certainly, was able, and even anxious, to see all that could be seen; but Miss Rocket's ankle was worse, and her whole frame so stiff from the pinching and dragging she had undergone that perfect quiet was indispensable; and, to Perceval's horror, she even hinted an apprehension that she should not be equal to moving for a month. Belinda, also, was feeling the effect of a cold bath; she had got what

large cheeks increased to magnitude — D'Esterre th vulgar, disgusting looking had ever chanced to light u

As neither of these unfor to brave the outward air, make his own escape ; and arm, he set off for the haunt gina to nurse the invalids expected visiter, who, true his own amusement was. panied by Sir Allan and came a short time previc hour. Lady Gertrude had I leave my readers to imag and disdain that took poss that curled her pointed n

was occupied ; and the look of gall and worm-wood with which she scanned the intruders.

Poor Georgina spent a very disagreeable morning : she saw, clearly enough, that her relations were objects of contemptuous ridicule to her titled neighbours, and of something more to her ill-natured mother-in-law. She could not conceal from herself that, although Perceval had not expressed his opinion of the virgin trio, it was anything but favourable.

The following day Lady Gertrude inflicted upon them her unwelcome company at dinner. As may be supposed, the conversation between a group of persons so dissimilar was not particularly interesting ; and D'Esterre, dreading a repetition of Belinda's screaming, proposed, by way of prevention, that Theresa should favour them by reading aloud a portion of an unpublished work of hers. After some display of real humility, she consented to submit her work for their amusement, but absolutely declined to be herself the lecturer. The poem was, there-

friend's performance.

It was curious to watch
and bearing of the difference
all stolid indifference, for
above the level of her
were too refined—the style
A trashy novel or an imprudent
have suited her better. Con-
trary, was really interested
the work was of a superior
good feeling biased him in
whose quivering lip, flushed
respiration, sufficiently ex-
anxiety to meet the approval
Even Rebecca, after professing
even more than novels, than
say something encouraging

kind thing in her whole life. Besides, although herself, quite insensible to the merits of the work, she had a high opinion of Perceval's judgment, and she knew by her son's manner that his praises were sincere; Theresa's poem was, therefore, decidedly a work of merit, and, as such, likely to be successful; and, totally ignorant of the difficulties of authorship, Lady Gertrude, by a very unusual effort of her torpid imagination, pictured to herself Theresa crowned with a poet's bays—the object of popular admiration, and reflecting a portion of her own eclat upon Georgina, the despised Georgina, for she, of course, would be considered as the author's patroness. No such honour had been enjoyed by Lady Gertrude, and she could not endure the idea of being equalled or surpassed in any way. Thus, sharpened by envy, her ill-nature even outdid itself.

There is nothing easier than to depreciate works of the imagination: before we venture to criticise those on history, political economy,

endeavouring to point out
only display our own
veriest dolt in life may
a lighter description, with
The reception such poems
altogether matter of taste
enough to say, "I do
suit me; I am not interested
is done. No one can blame
opinions, we all know, with
no ignorance, nor even
only a poem, or a novel
judgment—and any one
cise such frivolity.
strongly in the opposite
your censure by infusing
merit, and it needs very

—not much perhaps; ill-natured aspersions are seldom durable in their effects—but still you have wounded the author's feelings—you have done all the mischief in your power—you have gratified the spiteful inclination of your heart; your end is answered, you have committed an unkindness, and what more pleasing to an envious mind?

Forgive me this digression, gentle reader; the object of my present writing is to depict envy in its many and varied workings; and Janet Irving is not the only one of those, who figure in these pages, whose mind is tainted by this despicable passion.

Lady Gertrude was unsparing in her censures. In deference to Perceval's opinion, she, certainly, allowed Theresa some measure of talent—admitted that her work shewed taste and feeling; but then the poem exhibited so many faults, the metre was so objectionable, the rhyme so badly chosen, so much of everything, in fact, there ought not to have been—such an

Such was the opinion La
—and it was envy—the
envy which dictated the e
Belinda seconded the
to comprehend one line
listening to, she found the
keeping her eyes open ;
other stupid people do—
what was, in reality, abov

Theresa, timid both fro
in life (those whom the w
rarely self-confident), list
to the distressing discus
unable to conceal her agit
left the room. Georgina
but was detained by Mis
very pointed manner. wh

tone, for she thought Rebecca's open nostril and unusually crimson cheek foreboded an explosion of feeling whose effect it was impossible to foresee.

"Then listen," said the angry Miss Rocket, still addressing Georgina. "There was once a pig who, happening to stray beyond the farm-yard, saw near a hedge something that looked like a heap of dead leaves, or, perhaps, a lump of mud; we all know a pig's propensities, that his great delight is to burrow his nose in mire—and this pig was like other pigs, only that he was more blind and stupid than even pigs usually are: so, without further reflection, he made up to the place, and darted his long nose forwards, but he had good reason to repent his folly—for the dead leaves turned out to be a hedge-hog, asleep; and piggy wiggy got so many sharp pricks that he never forgot it: and, it is said, was remarkable for cleanliness of taste ever after."

Lady Gertrude had watched Theresa's de-

nounce *her* either impertinence
still less presume to administer
look of self-complacency, the
apparent on her sharp thin features
merely, to one of contempt,
of Miss Rocket's simile, as,
mouth, and mincing her words
hardly intelligible (a manner
invariably assumed when she
particularly lady-like and refined
her total inability to comprehend
of the fable.

“ I will explain the fable ;”
“ and then its application will
clear enough.” (Another impertinence
Georgina, but all in vain,
not see it.). “ By the pig,

particularly when they think they may do it with impunity: but, as the animal in the fable ran his nose into a hedge-hog's back, instead of a heap of mud, so it sometimes happens that, in place of timid submission, there may be a reprisal. There are plenty of human hedge-hogs; people who are quiet and harmless enough, if left alone, but whom it is very dangerous to irritate; so dangerous, indeed, that no one blessed with common sense would think of doing anything so foolish. Does not your ladyship agree with me?"

Lady Gertrude's mouth dropped, and her two little grey eyes shot sparks of fire; but Rebecca was glance proof, and she continued, looking steadily at the angry old lady.

"Perceval, Perceval, pray —," (am I to be insulted in this manner, she was going to add, but her son's back was turned, and his countenance, reflected in one of the mirrors, bore an expression of excessive amusement. Seeing, therefore, that an appeal to him was not likely

to avail much, Lady Gertrude determined upon making a dignified retreat, and therefore concluded her appeal to Perceval by desiring her carriage might be brought round.) "She was tired to death, she must return home."

Petty trials often fret the temper in a greater degree than actual suffering; and impertinence, still more than either: I consider the person who can bear impertinence unmoved, to possess a very enviable state of mind. Theresa, however, could not—she spent a restless, feverish night; while Rebecca, who felt herself insulted, through her friend, had the nightmare, and dreamt she was going to be married.

"Pray, Georgina," said Perceval, when they were alone; "does your friend write prose as well as poetry?"

"Oh dear, yes; she has written a great many things."

"What sort of things?"

"Tales and fragments, and —"

"Is she satirical?"

"She can be."

"Then, I think, Lady Gertrude stands a good chance of figuring in her next work, and what is more, she deserves it."

"Oh, Perceval, I hope not. Lady Gertrude would be so much annoyed, for Theresa can draw very absurd sketches, and quite true to life."

"What a fool my mother is!" observed Perceval, with more truth than filial reverence. "Who, but she, would have run the risk of provoking a quarrel where she must come worst off; and for no earthly purpose but to gratify her ill-nature, or display her fancied superiority, hurt the feelings of a person who, in all probability, will retaliate by holding her up to ridicule."

"I scarcely think Theresa would do that."

"She belongs to a class of beings whose sensitive feelings render them proverbially irritable—she grasps a powerful weapon, and it is hardly to be expected that, if wantonly attacked, she will hesitate to defend herself."

“Oh, dear, I hope not,” thought Georgina. “Lady Gertrude would dislike me more than ever, if one of my friends were so to annoy her.” And then Georgina thought how great a pity it was that Rebecca had irritated the old lady by telling the story about the pig, and she trembled as she looked forward to the morrow.

CHAPTER XIII.

BUT Rebecca, shrewd and sensible—well versed in human nature, though so ignorant of life, understood Lady Gertrude D'Esterre's character far better than her daughter-in-law. That amiable person belonged to the nettle tribe, which, as my readers, perhaps, know, stings those only who do not grasp it boldly :—and when the first ebullition of temper passed off, far from resenting Miss Rocket's plain dealing, she crouched before the spirit which she felt was more than a match for hers. And, not content with treating the party with infinitely

that had the effect of bringing conclusion.

Even Belinda, whose vanity was severely galled by some strictures D'Esterre thought proper to address, declared her willingness for the charm of being in Lord Fould's neighbourhood was not the horror of a dinner, a feast, or such a hostess. Perhaps, if Lord Fould had shewn any very warm cultivation an intimacy with Mr. Fould's lordship been expected; but Belinda would have forgiven the cast upon her taste by Lady Fould; neither was the case, she made no objection to her aunt's suggestion.

Belinda and herself for Atherley ; Theresa, for the great metropolis ; and, on that morning, the same elegant equipage (Miss Rocket resolutely refused to trust herself again to Mr. D'Esterre's coachman,) which brought them to Ringland, conveyed them once again to the neighbouring town.

“What a lovely place ! how happy Georgina must feel herself ;” said Theresa, whilst they drove through the grounds, her heart sinking at the prospect of London, with its smoke and fog—its noise and bustle—its crowded streets, and dismal houses ; and, to a friendless stranger like herself, its utter desolation.

“Humph,” replied Rebecca ; “Georgina has a fine house, and a carriage, and all that sort of thing ; but I question whether, after all, she would not rather be jogging back to Atherley with us, than seated up in that gay drawing-room, where one always feels as if walking about in a china shop.”

“Don't you think she is happy ?”

they ever will; she is too and nothing is more likely fort in a married life. Let his wife look upon him with the chances are ten to one in his advantage of it. Lady Gertrude looks at her as if she were no better child, and Georgina submits to resist."

"Oh," cried Theresa, "afraid of Lady Gertrude."

"Not *every body*!" said Belinda, "ing herself up."

"I can't say I've enjoyed much," observed Belinda.

"Nor I, either, I am sure," said Theresa. "And yet in such a l

that happiness dwells in persons, not places ; and I again repeat I fear there 's not much there, pretty though it may be."

Rebecca was correct in her suspicion ; whilst Mr. D'Esterre joyfully tendered his assistance in packing the ladies into their most inconvenient vehicle, and uttered his farewell with a degree of satisfaction he could with difficulty conceal, the tear that sprung to Georgy's eye, as she saw her friends depart, had in it quite as much of yearning for her old familiar home as of regret for their society.

Their withdrawal proved the signal for Lady Gertrude to disburden herself of the ill-temper she had been forced, in Miss Rocket's presence, to restrain ; and Perceval, worried out of all patience, discovered he had business in London that required his immediate personal attention ; and forthwith he set off, via mail, leaving Georgina entirely at the mercy of her mother-in-law ; who, as if to make the infliction more complete, disposed of her furniture

at length—came as a day
the nominal mistress of Ri
was, in truth, no more ; an
menial in the establishmen

CHAPTER XIV.

ONE of Lady Gertrude D'Esterre's fancies was to travel slowly. She professed herself unequal to more than thirty miles a day; and, as Ringland was eighty miles from the capital, they were to sleep two nights on the road, and did not leave home before the post hour.

Georgina had been vainly endeavouring to suit Lady Gertrude's tea to her fastidious fancy (it is no trifle to make tea for a captious old woman, who has long been accustomed to prepare it for herself); and, vexed and wearied, anxiously waited the termination of the meal,

when the servant entered, bearing the contents of the letter-bag; some newspapers—a note for Lady Gertrude—a letter for Georgina. Without the least hesitation, Lady Gertrude seized upon the latter.

“For my mistress, my lady,” said the servant; “for Mrs. D’Esterre.”

“Are you sure it is for Mrs. D’Esterre? let me see—ah, so it is;” and very reluctantly she replaced it on the salver.

Georgina’s countenance brightened — the letter was from Atherley—instantly she broke the seal.

“Georgina,” said Lady Gertrude, “I perceive that you are not aware, it is not considered well bred to open and read a letter in the presence of other persons; especially, without going through the ceremony of asking permission. *I*, you must have observed, have not opened mine. I do not wish to impose any unnecessary restraint upon you, but to give some little insight into the manners and cus-

toms of good society. If your letter had been from my son, there might have been some excuse for your eagerness—but the communication of a mere acquaintance—however, read it now, I merely wished to point out your error. Pray don't let me interrupt you."

Georgina apologised, and laid down her dispatch, but it was from Atherley—from home; it brought tidings of her father—and, although the commencement was in Belinda's handwriting, it was too tantalizing to see it by her side, and still unread; and almost unwittingly she plunged into its contents.

"My dear Georgina," wrote Belinda, "I know not what you will think of me; whether I shall be condemned as the most versatile of human beings, or considered the most unfortunate, when you learn that the crisis of my fate is near at hand—my destiny will quickly be achieved—my doom for ever sealed. Yet, my Georgina, what a destiny—what an ignominious destiny! In a short, a very short time the wretched Belinda becomes the wife of—of Pratt—the wife of Pratt! Mrs. Gustavus

Pratt ! Was there ever such a dreadful name ? How all this has been brought about, and what the means resorted to, to bend my feeble will—I cannot now disclose. You shall hear all when we meet, which will be, I trust, ere long ; for the marriage is to take place almost immediately, and, as we are to reside in London, we shall, of course, be constantly together. One thing I have insisted upon, that Gustavus shall withdraw from business as speedily as possible ; and, in the mean time, he will be but little at the warehouse. It may be all very well for his father to spend his life looking over the books, and ascertaining how many turbot and mackerel they dispose of—but for *my* husband such an occupation would be out of the question. I have also stipulated that an application be made to the Herald's office respecting a coat of arms ; my Aunt Rocket proposes three sprats, with a lobster for a crest ; and for a motto 'Sprats make Prats.' Did you ever hear anything so shocking ? But enough of this ; I am going into Marston to shop—so I will conclude.

“ Ever your affectionate,

BELINDA.”

“ P.S. Does Lord Olivius Yerfourd ever call at Ringland now ? I forgot to tell you that, when we

were dining out, the other day, and some fish was offered me—I could not command myself; but blushed the deepest crimson—and when the lady of the house was asked if a London fishmonger supplied her table—I trembled lest she should say ‘yes,’ and that his name was Pratt!”

“MY DEAR GEORGINA,

“I have been teasing Belinda, for the last half hour, to make over her pen to me; and yet I know not why I am so anxious to write to you, for, excepting that your father continues as well and cheerful as could reasonably be expected, when separated from his dearest Georgina, I have nothing pleasant to tell you. Belinda’s marriage is anything but gratifying to us. We dislike the connexion, and still more the man: but, with her accustomed imprudence, she has committed herself so seriously that Maurice, and indeed all our friends, consider it next to impossible to break off the engagement. Our only hope is that, as Mr. Pratt certainly admires her exceedingly, and there appears a prospect of every comfort (for he has an excellent income), the marriage will prove less unhappy than she, at present, affects to apprehend. To say the truth, I think her reluctance, not altogether genuine, and, could she but be quite convinced, of the in-

business; and, unhappily, deeper cause for anxiety than connexion; our beloved Major state; he has, you know, health, and, latterly, the ravages of the vessel on the lungs has given serious apprehensions. For concealed this terrifying circumstance languor and debility as we were gradually made. The case is not considered present, all exertion must of his profession suspended be spent abroad. Next virtuous it appears to calculate remote — when in a world change that we know not may bring forth.

“ My dearest Georgina, I tell her, I think Major Bertram has received a

fluous, that a father is always welcome and expected in his daughter's house; but, although outwardly agreeing with me, I see, he is not himself convinced—therefore, you will do well to propose a meeting when next you write, and let that be soon; your letters are always looked for with the greatest eagerness, and as there can be no difficulty about franks, you need never delay writing until you have enough to say to make your dispatch worth postage.

“ Ever your truly affectionate,

Atherley, Tuesday.

“ CHARLOTTE ARNOLD.”

Many and frequent changes flitted across Georgina's countenance whilst perusing Charlotte's communication. Surprise at Belinda's marriage, vexation at the prospect of all that marriage would entail. Deep, heartfelt grief for Maurice—and painful self-reproach that she should, even in appearance, be neglectful of her father.

Lady Gertrude observed all this; and, laying down a piece of thin, half buttered toast, sat, with her little keen eyes fixed peeringly on the

more tea. Lady Gertrude
at the full cup that she
Georgina coloured at her

“Your letter is from .

“Yes ; from home.”

“Home !” thought
where the heart is, then
Then, aloud, “ You
hope ? ”

“ My father is much
gina.

“ What does that mean
tend to express when
Berrington is much as

“ That he is always .

“ In what way ? perhaps
might suggest something

"Oh," said Lady Gertrude, as she concluded, "Major Berrington suffers from opthemia—a very unpleasant complaint, certainly; and, at his age, I believe, not often cured; indeed, I have known more than one instance where total blindness has been the result. Major Berrington should have the best advice. Who attends him?"

"Papa has no regular physician."

"He is wrong, he should put himself into the hands of the first practitioner. Pray say so when next you write."

"The expense of constant medical attendance would be, I fear, beyond my poor father's means, at present."

"Ah, true. I had forgotten—Major Berrington is in needy circumstances; he is, therefore, quite right in avoiding all unnecessary expense. Still, advice is of great importance, and I should think that, were his case fully known, some one would attend him gratis—you know, medical men are proverbially

Atherley, who would, I d
father for nothing, or, a
little; and, although he
he might be useful," s
without, however, having
tion of doing as she prop

"Oh, no," cried Geo
My father needs no such
wishes for advice, my co
is too happy to afford it.'

Georgina's lip quiver
Maurice's name; an in
from being unobserved
and suspicious listener.

"What is Mr. Arnol

"No; a physician."

"A physician?"

"In much practice?—I suppose not; if he were clever, he would hardly settle down in the country."

"He wished to be near his family."

"Ah, yes, I suppose he is a brother of that—that young person who was here and dressed so strangely."

Georgina's reply in the affirmative was followed by a brief silence. But Lady Gertrude had not as yet discovered the clue to Georgina's agitation, and she would not let the subject drop.

"Is there a probability of any of that party visiting London?"

"I hardly know. Yes, I suppose one of my cousins, at least, will be in town."

"One—which one?" sharply enquired Lady Gertrude.

"Belinda, the one who was here."

"Belinda! and what, may I ask, takes her to town; not again to force herself into my son's house, I presume?"

into nobody's house—she

“Oh, is she then going

“She is.”

“And the name—may

“Pratt,” said Georgina.

“Pratt? not a bad name
Lord Camden?”

“No,” replied Georgina,
that there is any connexion

“Is it a good match? Is
man in easy circumstances

“He is in business,” said
ing violently.

“Business? What business

“Something in the city.

“Oh, then, I suppose
premises?”

"Humph," thought Lady Gertrude; "house in the neighbourhood of London—very dangerous indeed; invitations to spend long days, walking about the grounds—meet the old lover there." Then, aloud, "Her brother will hardly be able to leave his patients, I conclude, or he would be with his sister?"

"Maurice has been obliged to relinquish his profession for the present."

"He is, then, an idle man? that is bad at his time of life—it should not be suffered."

"It is unavoidable." Then, in a husky voice she read the paragraph from Charlotte's letter.

Lady Gertrude was satisfied. Georgina's agitation had been accounted for; and she had only to indulge her natural unkind propensity, by dilating on his danger—expressing her confident opinion that there was not a probability of his recovery; and this style of conversation was persevered in until Georgina, completely overcome, rose from the breakfast table, and hurried into the open air.

"You will catch cold!" cried Lady Gertrude: but the warning was unheeded. Her ladyship then rang the bell, and dispatched a servant to inform Mrs. D'Esterre that the carriage was coming round immediately, and Lady Gertrude begged she would lose no time in equipping herself.

Georgina obeyed; and, with worn spirits and drooping heart, took her seat in the chariot that was to convey her from one costly mansion to another. Smaller, indeed, and less pretending in every way than Ringland, but still replete with tasteful elegance and wisely chosen comfort.

I will not describe that wearying journey, the stiff uncomfortable meal, the tedious evening spent upon the road; nor relate how Lady Gertrude talked on incessantly; how often Georgina pressed her hand upon her eyes to repel the tears that would gush forth, as her companion continued to prognosticate a fatal termination to Maurice Arnold's illness, and total blindness to her father. All

persons know what it is to travel, how delightful in congenial society, and all persons could, I suppose, equally imagine what a journey with Lady Gertrude D'Esterre for sole companion must be.

But "Time and the hour wear out the longest day ;" and postboys and horses brought, at length, this real exercise of patience to a close—and Georgina's heart beat, and her eye recovered somewhat of its wonted brilliancy, as the carriage stopped at the door of a moderately sized house in Upper Grosvenor-street. After a separation of ten days, she was again to meet her husband.

She was, however, mistaken ; no Perceval advanced to hand her from the carriage, or bid her welcome. They reached town about three in the afternoon, and D'Esterre, not calculating on their arrival at so early an hour, was from home ; nor did he return for some time. Georgina walked slowly and sadly up stairs : she remembered, in passing Hyde Park,

truth, she was the least easy
she could not but think
have foregone his ride
to welcome and receive
trude, as tenacious of her
or lady's maid, felt highly
want of due respect; and
spending as much time
off her bonnet and shawl
drawing-room, she found
seated bolt upright, having
and least commodious chair
unemployed and looking

Georgina glanced towards
then placed herself at
her agreeable companion
have whiled away the

presence forbad any such display of natural curiosity. There were also books of all descriptions, but Lady Gertrude chose to talk, and Georgina could not choose but listen. She had asked for her work-box, but she asked in vain. Mrs. Price saw no occasion for unpacking more of the contents of the imperial than would be absolutely necessary for the dinner toilet; even that, need not be done for some time yet. Georgina, therefore, was deprived of the feminine resource of making holes in a piece of muslin, and drawing her thread backwards and forwards; and so thoroughly vexed and wearied did she finally become that, when, in answer to Lady Gertrude's summons (repeated about every quarter of an hour), the servant appeared, and, after professing his entire ignorance of his master's plans, gently closed the door, she really almost wished herself a footman, for he, at all events, could escape from Lady Gertrude.

At length, the clatter of horses' hoofs was

heard, followed by a knock at the street door ; Georgina caught the tones of D'Esterre's well-known voice, his footstep upon the stairs, and advanced to meet him ; not, however, with all the alacrity she would have shewn two hours before.

" Why, Georgina," he said, as they turned to re-enter the apartment, " you are not looking well—anything wrong—what's the matter ?"

" Nothing, nothing at all ; I am a little wearied, it will soon pass off."

" Bored to death with my mother, I suppose," muttered D'Esterre, more than half aloud ; never, for an instant, suspecting how greatly his thoughtlessness had deepened the shade upon his young wife's brow, or how much heart-heaviness had taken from her usual elasticity of gait.

Lady Gertrude, also, had risen to meet her son ; but, catching his last words, remained stationary in the middle of the room, looking like a petrified vinegar cruet ; and received his filial salutation in solemn silence.

Then came the usual questions ápropos of travelling. Where they had slept? How been accommodated? State of the roads, &c.: all of which Lady Gertrude did not condescend to answer; and Georgina's replies were short and unsatisfactory. To be called upon to give an opinion upon the most trifling subject, in Lady Gertrude's presence, was always a penance to her.

D'Esterre opened and read two or three letters they had brought from Ringland, then, looking at his watch, observed it was time to dress for dinner, and they separated. The meal passed heavily, Lady Gertrude continued sullen, and Georgina taciturn. Perceval, at length, wearied of home, "of wife and mother tired," suddenly recollected that a celebrated *danseuse* was to make her *début* at the Opera that night, and, bidding Georgina "take care of herself," transferred himself to a more genial scene; leaving the ladies to amuse each other.

silence or intended sign
a variety of prophetic
dissipated manners of th
ill-calculated to re-assur
bling for her husband's
wounded by Perceval's
could not bear to hear
bated, or his principles
deavoured therefore to
many an excuse, which I
was but too probably unt

Lady Gertrude, irritate
sisted in her strictures;
hour for retiring arrive
herself into a fever. C
exhausted, laid her head
sought to banish from I

thronging to her mind were scarcely less distressing—Belinda's marriage, and her residence in town—Maurice Arnold's mortal illness—and her beloved father, pining for her society, but whom she dared not venture to invite beneath her roof, in sad succession came before her, until, at last, she fairly cried herself to sleep.

CHAPTER

AND Perceval was at the Opera, admiring — criticising the scenery, and bowing to more than one of the various boxes. Amongst them was Lady Kingsbury. D'Eveling went to the theatre without the slightest wish to meet Miss Irving — but when he recognised her, it was hardly possible to pass her by without informing her of his arrival in town, and, for the

cordiality becoming their relationship, made the proper enquiries for her sister and Lady Gertrude, expressed her purpose of calling early the ensuing morning; then, turning towards a gentleman who had followed Mr. D'Esterre into the box, began a lively conversation. Perceval would have made his escape; but Lady Kingsbury had seen some rare old china that morning, she wished to purchase it, but could not quite decide upon giving the required price, and with the utmost earnestness she now sought Mr. D'Esterre's advice and opinion. Lady Kingsbury was rather a wordy person; and while she detailed with great precision her ideas of the beauty and various other merits of the porcelain, her wishes for its possession, with her anxiety to make a good bargain, Perceval, although apparently giving all his attention to her, was, in fact, listening, and with no slight interest to Janet's lively, entertaining badinage; and, after Lady Kingsbury had exhausted her breath and subject,

after promising himself to endeavour to negotiate the business—he was still there, still listening to, and finally, taking part in the conversation.

Whilst waiting for their carriage, they were joined by Sir Marcus Kingsbury.

“Are you going home?” he enquired.

“No,” replied Lady Kingsbury, “we are engaged to Lady Charlotte Desmond’s ball. Won’t you come?”

“Why yes, I may as well look on for half an hour.”

“Mr. D’Esterre, there is a vacant seat.”

“Are you going my way?”

“To Lower Brook-street.”

“Pray, Marcus,” enquired Lady Kingsbury, after the opera and different performers had been discussed, “who is that strange looking person you spoke to as we came out?”

“That——oh——Mrs. Gosford; Alfred Gosford’s wife. D’Esterre, you know Alfred Gosford?”

“Hardly. I knew his brother intimately;

we were at Christchurch together. *He*, poor fellow, was drowned."

"Yes; and by his death Alfred came into so large a fortune he fancied there would be no end to it; and so contrived to run himself out before he had been five years his own master."

"How very reprehensible," observed Lady Kingsbury.

"Yes, it was a foolish piece of business, and now I think he has done worse."

"How?"

"He has gone and married a woman whose relations he is ashamed of."

"I thought," said Janet, "Mrs. Gosford had been an heiress? I am confident I heard something of the kind."

"So she was; at least, her father left her fifty thousand pounds, and she will have twenty more when her mother is kind enough to depart."

"Then why are her connexions so objectionable?"

family.*

"Was she actually a cook

"So it is said. Talks
Brisket—and all that sort of

"A very disagreeable c
observed Perceval. "But I
see much of her—keep her
of course, as much as possil

"Quite the reverse: for
money is entirely in her owi

* What is the reason that when
his relations and lower himself b
almost invariably selects the cook?
of a gentleman espousing a lady's
is by no means unusual for the c
head of the household; and yet, sh
interesting member of the establis
serving women's charms; I can s
peasant girl, especially if, as in W
national costume: but the vulgar.
... is particularly revolting to

is obliged to pay the old] lady all sorts of civilities. She was with Mrs. Gosford this evening."

"I saw," said Janet, "a very singular looking person in a red and yellow turban—was that Mrs. Brereton?"

"Yes. What with her size, and flashy dress, I never see her without thinking of some great balloon."

"Is the daughter amiable?"

"A perfect Xantippe. Gosford is worn to death with her."

"In what way?"

"Jealous—won't let him even look at another woman."

"I'm glad she's not my wife," said D'Esterre, quickly.

"You would not like Georgina to be jealous?" asked Janet.

"Nothing would annoy me more—it is a sort of thing I could not tolerate."

"If I," cried Sir Marcus, "were married to

a woman who thought fit to give herself any jealous airs, by Jove, I would soon shew her the outside of the street door."

"Hush, hush, Marcus," rejoined his mother.

"It's really very lucky, *I* am not married to either of you, gentlemen," observed Janet, with a degree of effrontery which astonished Lady Kingsbury.

"*You* would not, surely, be weak enough to give way to such paltry feelings, Janet?" replied Perceval.

"I cannot answer for myself. At any rate, I lean to the opinion that there can exist no strong affection without jealousy; therefore—were I married to a man I loved, I fear I should sometimes offend on that score."

"Then you would do foolishly, very foolishly," said Perceval with emphasis. A woman who gives way to jealousy only bores her husband, and perhaps drives him to conduct which, but for her ill-humour (and all jealous people become ill-tempered) he never would have dreamt of."

Janet carefully treasured up this observation of D'Esterre's.

"What a fine woman Lady Marsden is," remarked Sir Marcus, who was, in common with the generality of very young men, an amateur of full blown roses.

"My dear Marcus," said Lady Kingsbury, very much afraid her son might be entangled by Lady Marsden, "she is old enough to be your mother."

"Lady Marsden is not to my taste. Too much embonpoint to please me," observed Perceval; while Janet reflected exultingly, that her sister's beauty was of the same cast as Lady Marsden's, and might one day become liable to similar animadversions.

"Won't you come in for a few minutes?" she asked, as Perceval handed her from the carriage.

"No—I am homeward bound."

"Afraid of being lectured?"

"Bah!" He replied, in a tone by no means

well assured; for he could not but feel he had in some degree deserved it.

"Janet, where are you? What has become of Marcus?" enquired Lady Kingsbury.

"Indeed I don't know—oh—there he is, in the refreshment room."

"Sir Marcus and Lady Kingsbury," shouted the different officials, whose place it was to announce the guests.

"Where is Marcus—where is Marcus?"

"Just within that door; I saw him a minute ago."

"Dear, how tiresome! He always runs away. Do try if you can't catch his eye."

"Sir Marcus and Lady Kingsbury," was again vociferated, as the two ladies, deserted by their knight, began ascending the staircase. Sir Marcus looked up from the refreshment room and nodded to his mother, who at first received his salutation with some gravity; but he was talking to the wealthy daughter of a noble

house, and maternal pride triumphed over maternal displeasure.

"Sir Marcus and Lady Kingsbury," was a third time repeated, as Janet and her aunt reached the reception room, and one or two groups of persons gave evidence of an incipient inclination to smile.

"I wish now, I had made Perceval come in," said Janet.

"Perceval is much better where he is," replied her aunt, "married men have no business at such places at all. I don't think he ought to have been at the Opera to night. Oh—General Tufton, how glad I am to see you."

"Miss Irving," said one of the young ladies of the house, "the Duke of L—— desires an introduction."

Janet could hardly forbear starting with pleasure and astonishment. The Duke of L—— was decidedly the most exclusive young man of the day—had never been known to dance but once, and then—with a royal princess—and now, he wished to dance with her. A quadrille, too, what motive could he have? She knew his Grace perfectly by sight, and once had dined in

ambitious spirit tower
as they took their place
and her partner's first
exultation, and made
yet.

"I think I saw you

"Yes, we were there
to-night."

"Was she? I only
and I didn't stay that
get here."

"Why that haste?"
could not express her
walking through his path

"Yes," he resumed
I don't often come to
a person I wish part
they told me all the

had he singled her out from amidst the myriads of lovely and high-bred women, who graced the assembly?) "But I might have spared myself the trouble—I don't see her, or anything like her," rejoined the nobleman, after a slow survey of the room, and Janet's cheek grew pale.

"Is it impertinent to ask this lady's name?"

"Name?—Oh no. It's a young married woman, who I'm told is singularly beautiful—something one seldom meets with, at least in England. Oswald raves about her—you know Oswald?"

"I am acquainted with a gentleman of that name; Lord Hilpington's eldest son."

"The same—a most excellent fellow."

"Mr. Oswald appeared a very gentlemanlike man."

"He was at Eastbeach last Autumn, where it seems this Mrs. D'Esterre was."

"Mrs. D'Esterre!" exclaimed Janet, turning almost white.

"Yes; I'm told she was nobody, no connexion, no family—but beautiful, exquisitely beautiful, and D'Esterre fell in love with, and

Janet made an effort
acquainted, even connected

“Then, I suppose,
Another effort—“My
sister.”

“Indeed! Then, I
word of truth in O
plied the Duke; and
to her seat, with as if
he had said nothing
feelings, or mortify her

“So, we are *nobles*
his Grace is willing
Georgina’s beauty and
she is my sister; and
breeding to inform me
excited, overbearing con-
Miss Twining’s seat

than the majority of young men of his age and standing in the world, but excessively shy and awkward. During Miss Irving's visit at Ringland, he had been much taken with her plausible manners and ladylike appearance. The impression had been strengthened rather than diminished by time, and as, in point of fortune and connexion, she was a perfectly eligible *partie*, he merely awaited a favourable opportunity to avow his love ; and, perhaps stimulated by the Duke's example, he resolved no longer to delay making the declaration. His opening observation was not, however, greatly to the point.

“How did you like your late partner?”

During the dance, Janet had seen Mr. Bingley hovering near her, and thinking it just possible he suspected the Duke's impertinence (a surmise strengthened by a certain degree of awkwardness he evinced in addressing her), resolved to do away with the impression, and replied in a firm tone of voice——

“I think the Duke of L——quite delightful. One of the pleasantest men I ever met with.”

“Indeed ! I never heard his Grace so highly

you, at any rate."

"Yes; and I am so

"Are you?" he as

"Indeed, I am exce

"And no one but
reach your standard?"

"I will not say that

"Has no other pe
terest you?"

"Can he mean P
angrily. And she a
negative.

"I grieve to hear
panion; but in so lo
on Janet, who, little
intentions, gave herself
him.

A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z

"You heard of the Duke of L—'s wager?"

"I suppose you mean his dancing?"

"Both; for one was the consequence of the other."

"How?"

"I don't know all the particulars: there was some altercation between the Duke and Lord Westleigh, which ended in a bet on the Duke's part, that he would not only dance (I believe Lord Westleigh had said he could not) but chuse for his partner the ugliest girl in the whole room. They say, Lord Westleigh will lose some thousands."

"Nay, I saw his Grace's partner: she was certainly far from being the ugliest girl in the room, I thought her decidedly pretty."

"So Lord Westleigh says; while the Duke maintains, that beauty is entirely matter of opinion, and that in *his* opinion, Miss Harding (I believe that is the name) is without doubt the ugliest woman here."

"What could induce the Duke to make so ridiculous a bet?"

"The love of notoriety, I suppose. Some people will do anything to get themselves talked of."

lady's charms."

"How very unpleasant—

Never was pity more scarcely could Janet suppose she was distressed by all hearing. She looked at her partner; but he, full of life, evidently not profited by closure. This conviction, assured her, until, turning in a contrary direction, she standing close at hand, and a relation of the whole story. For he drew near and said in a tone of dolence—

"Sad business, Janet—
But never mind, *beauty*, your
opinion. I dare say, there

"If this had happened to Georgina," thought the irritated Janet, "how very differently would Marcus have conducted himself!"

"Miss Irving, I fear I may appear presuming; yet, if I might entreat—" said Mr. Bingley, making a decisive effort.

Janet fancied he wished to join the waltzers, and, quite beside herself with vexation, cut him short by saying, pettishly, "Indeed you must excuse me—I cannot possibly; pray conduct me to a seat, I am dreadfully fatigued; the most unpleasant evening I have ever spent."

"She understands my meaning," thought the mortified young man; and from that moment all idea of marrying Janet Irving vanished from his brain.

Lady Kingsbury greeted Miss Irving with much complacency; indeed, what chaperone would do otherwise than smile upon the recent partner of a Duke? besides, she had penetrated Mr. Bingley's motives; and Janet, likely to become the wife of a man of good fortune, was a very different person from Janet, her ladyship's protégée; and, in some respects, depend-

ceedingly, and, with a
(Lady Kingsbury had a
agement in such matters,
right); "with a little ju
have no doubt will mak
take Georgina into ou
Bingley and Mr. D'Este

"Oh no, no, pray say
to anybody."

Lady Kingsbury lool
conceal from your sist
must give her so much

"Because she would
fident she would. Ma
husbands everything."

"I see no great e
D'Esterre might do us
such matters, one man l

still so greatly agitated that she scarcely knew what she said. "Besides, there is no foundation for the surmise—there is not, I assure you; Mr. Bingley has not, and never had, the remotest idea of marrying me. Pray say nothing to Georgina."

"Humph," thought Lady Kingsbury; "what is the meaning of all this? why is D'Esterre to know nothing of Mr. Bingley's admiration? Can it be?—No, no, that is impossible—in love with her brother-in-law?—I cannot believe it: still, I wish I had not left her at Ringland. His coming to the Opera and remaining so long in our box, the very first evening of his wife's arrival in town, was certainly singular—I must look to this. She may think it all very well to marry Marcus, and be attached to Perceval for all that; such things have been. Oh, that I never had undertaken the charge of such a girl; the anxiety she causes me will bring me to my grave; and there appears no probability of my getting rid of her."

Influenced by these suspicions, Lady Kingsbury watched Miss Irving narrowly—perhaps it was well for Georgina, she did; but Janet

When also the matter
sided, and she could
circumstances of the ev
vinced that, for once, he
clear-sighted than she; :
Irving have recalled he
her ill-considered words
—the gentleman was f
remained for her but to
even here, the natural
shewed itself. It was G
fortune that had marr
Oswald's absurd and e
of her sister's beauty, th
not have honoured Lad
ball with his illustrious
not, therefore, have be
subject of his silly bet;
—the gentleman was f

From this period, Janet's heart became, if possible, still more closed against each good and Christian feeling; and she offered no resistance to the fiendish disposition that enthralled her—she struggled not to break the chain that held her bound and miserable. A well-regulated, religiously-instructed mind had shrunk in horror from the sinful feelings Janet fostered, and gave way to; but in all her education, self-government had been omitted; and for religion—light indeed were Janet's opinions on that subject. To appear once on the Sabbath at a fashionable chapel, dressed in the highest point of elegance; to kneel, or sit, or stand with graceful ease, or studied attitude—to repeat a few hurried words morning and evening (that is to say, when time allowed), and once or twice a year to approach the communion-table; thus was her duty to her God performed. And towards man—she considered that, in bestowing on the clamorous mendicant, who stood at the shop-door, the heavy coins she would have found it troublesome to carry, she absolved herself from every obligation to her fellow mortals. Such was Janet Irving's code of faith and

On the morning of the
town, Georgina awoke with
ache.

"Ah," thought Mr. D'Este:
fit of temper; in a woman, he
temper are synonymous. What
marry!"

Perhaps, too, remembering that
Irving had amused him on the
ing, he also thought that the
have been so great, had he
to the younger sister.

He was, however, quite mis-
culations. It is true, Georgina
unkindness and neglect; but
nature to resent his conduct
proach him in the most gentle
it had been better if she had
of D'Este's carelessness

in her simple cap and robe de chambre—prettier, perhaps, than he had ever thought before; very good-tempered likewise, more so than many wives would have shewn themselves under similar circumstances—but he neither gave her credit for the sense she really possessed, nor for the affection she entertained for him.

Still, Perceval was glad to escape a scene: and he descended to the breakfast-room, gaily singing one of the airs he had heard on the preceding evening, and resolved to make amends for his recent delinquency by spending the remainder of the morning in Georgina's dressing-room.

Very different was the greeting he received from Lady Gertrude; and long and biting the lecture administered by that respectable old lady. Perceval studied the newspaper, according to the well-bred practice of English gentlemen, drank his coffee, hastily swallowed the other accessories to his breakfast, and shewed a disposition to make his exit, before his mother had half concluded her harangue.

"Stay," cried she, "Perceval, I charge you, stay. I have yet something further to com-

And Lady Gertrude from the history of the letter; Maurice Arnold's illness, tended to consider as a fair his freedom from the shackles and the power of seeking delight in — his probable and all the evils likely, result from the intimacy Georgina.

Mr. D'Esterre's, as I have seen was not a jealous temper view the matter in the serious did. He was wearied with on it as an old wife's too serious attention. The neglect of Lady Gertrude's solicitude by her lecturing instead of

CHAPTER XVI.

It was yet early in the day, when a simply-dressed female approached one of the houses in Portland-place, and, after knocking timidly, enquired, in a yet more hesitating manner, for the lady of the mansion.

"Mrs. Daymour is not at home," saucily replied the footman, while nearly closing the door.

"I am here by appointment; be good enough to give my card to Mrs. Daymour," urged the applicant, at the same time proffering a card.

The man took it with some reluctance, and, after pausing for a moment, as though he were considering whether she should remain standing

Mrs. Daymour. Both I
grade in society which re
nobility; they were ric
dressed, and everything
tokened affluence and co

“How very tiresome,”
“I really ought to hav
myself the trouble and
this person. Why did
desired to be denied.”

“She said she came by

“True; I believe sh
should have written.”

“Will not a mess
Broughton.

“Hardly; messages a
delivered. Where is she

“Waiting below, ma’s

"How provoking! Well, shew her into the library, and say I will come down and speak to her."

The servant retired.

"Some unworthy applicant for my friend's bounty, I conclude from her perseverance?" observed Lady Broughton.

"Not exactly that, but something quite as unpleasant. The fact is, I have, unfortunately, a sister living in Cornwall, who is in want of a governess, and wrote to me to engage one for her."

"It certainly is one of the greatest drawbacks to residing in town, that all your friends and relations seem to consider your time and trouble as public property; in short, that you have no earthly thing to attend to but their commissions."

"Which, by the way, are often impossibilities. People living in the country, form strange ideas of what may be done or bought in the metropolis."

"And, when you have taken all imaginable pains to please them, are as certain to be dissatisfied as the sun is to rise to-morrow."

absolutely, it is very
hours, and wear out your
horses, buying articles th
just as well at the neigh
after all your trouble to b
and lining for Caroline's l
or, that the lace for trimm
narrow; or, Eliza's Germ
shade. Persons who liv
stricted circle of society
much importance to trifles

"But all this is nothing
or lady's maid."

"Oh, I really think, I
either one or the other."

"Such has often been
I keep until the next l
begging my services."

"Has she had any?"

"How very trying!"

"Especially for the purveyor."

"She, perhaps, requires a great deal."

"Quite too much. Every accomplishment, good principles, pleasing manners, and a low salary."

"It must, indeed, be difficult to execute such a commission."

"Absolutely impossible. I was quite wearied of the search, and after seeing a variety of young persons (*ladies* they style themselves), not one of whom appeared likely to answer, in a fit of despair, I resolved to close with the next offer, be it what it might."

"Was it at all promising?"

"No; that is to say, the young woman professed very little, would not undertake either music or dancing; but I engaged her, for I felt she was, perhaps, likely to do quite as well as any other; she would, at any rate, remain her quarter, and then receive her dismissal as her predecessors have done. She was willing, moreover, to pay her journey backwards and forwards; and, if my sister found her inefficient, the disappointment would be of

less consequence; besides, I find she has been living in our part of the country, which rather interests me in her favour. But, unluckily, after everything was settled, and nothing remained but for my sister to fix the day for her journey, I heard of another person whose application I cannot possibly refuse; and now I must inform this lady that her services will be dispensed with."

"Very unpleasant, indeed."

"Exceedingly, and as Mr. Daymour is from home, if she should take it into her head to be impertinent, I shall really not know what to do."

"I should hardly anticipate that, but it is a disagreeable thing to be obliged to forfeit an engagement."

"Very, I told my housekeeper she ought to have mentioned Miss Doughty sooner."

"Your housekeeper? Is it on her recommendation you engage governesses?"

"Not always," replied Mrs. Daymour, smiling. "In the present instance, the fact is, one of my trades-people has a daughter educated for a governess, who has applied for my sister's situation; and as her father is an extremely

civil, accommodating sort of man, I do not like to disoblige him by a refusal—you know, my dear Lady Broughton, it is not pleasant to quarrel with anybody.”

“Certainly not,” replied her ladyship, while she internally subjoined, “especially where the immediate payment of a bill might be the inconvenient result.”

“And this makes me nervous about meeting this person—I mean the individual I first engaged; she may think proper to make a scene, a thing I dislike above all others—I really wish I had thought of writing, but, to say the truth, this ball of Lady D—’s has put everything else out of my head.”

“What a delightful ball it was, all was so well arranged.”

“Charming: but I must not keep this person waiting any longer. Will you excuse me for ten minutes?”

“By all means.”

In obedience to Mrs. Daymour’s orders, Theresa had been ushered into the library. To one of her habits and turn of mind no spot could have been more congenial, but it was

in rich binding, lined the box
yet, in all probability, she would
value far better than the actual

How strange, at times, appear
of wealth; and how perplexing
mind the manner in which
this time-state are often meted
to the few—want to the many
suffering to the wise and good
knave's prosperity. In true
manner of God's providence
labyrinth, whose mazes reason
or, she will lose her way. . .
can safely tread those mazes
looks beyond this fleeting life
fixed on eternity, can penetrate
hidden wisdom that directs
though she may not comprehend

rather let his faith wax strong, although his reason faint — this seeming partiality in the allotment of terrestrial good affords a striking argument in favour of a future state.

“I am really much distressed,” observed Mrs. Daymour, in a hesitating manner, to Miss Flagge; “really quite concerned — pray be seated, but—but—at the time I entered into an engagement with you, I was not aware that I had already compromised myself in another quarter; and, as that young person appears more likely to suit my sister’s wishes, I am afraid it will be impossible to—to ratify your engagement.”

Theresa was thunderstruck: she believed the arrangement (as indeed it was) to be complete. The disappointment and surprise, therefore, with which she now learnt its entire termination kept her silent for some seconds. Mrs. Daymour, in full anticipation of a violent, perhaps even abusive, protest against the injustice of her proceedings, laid her hand upon the bell string;—but Theresa, downcast, and broken spirited, far from resisting, submitted without a deprecating word. She did, indeed,

lay glittering amidst
sober-coloured garment,
unwilling attention,
heart but seldom oper
diately its own, and sh
part she had been led t

There was, however,
be absurd to run the
her housekeeper and
heavy bill was owing—
ficed: all that remain
injustice as much as po
victim speedily. A pro
in mind on any futu
believed, achieve the
impatience bring about

Theresa coldly than
her proffered patrons

CHAPTER XVII.

THERESA'S history was no uncommon one. She was not, it is true, one of that class of mortals whose path in life is ever tracked by tears, with whom the smile is as a stranger guest, the sigh the close, familiar friend ;—still, much of trouble, much of sorrow and vexation had been hers.

She was the daughter of a Solicitor in very moderate circumstances ; who, dying, left his business to his only son—and twelve hundred pounds to his daughter. At first, she resided with her brother, and, as far as regarded pecuniary matters, felt her father's loss comparatively little. Mr. Flagge, junior, however, unfortu-

health rendered this pl
and she was thus more
to a proposal made to
carried on a very exte
profitable, business in t

“Place your money i
you twice the interest
pledge myself to give
withdraw it at any r
proper.” Thus spoke

The proposal was te
no reason to doubt h
safety of his house ; an
acceded to the schem
found no cause to rep
interest was pretty reg
of strict economy, to
arising from the labor

keeping which consisted her sole extravagance.

But the fluctuating state of trade put an end to this halcyon course of life. Mr. Thomas Flagge's receipts diminished—ready money became scarce, and he found it more convenient to postpone, than pay, his niece's trifling dividend.

There is something very curious in the opinions people entertain of the relative value of money. The man with ten thousand a year talks of his own poverty; but considers as many hundreds, or even half as many, quite sufficient for his younger brother. Curates, and half-pay officers, to judge by the manner they are paid, have, one might imagine, fewer occasions for expenditure than butlers and men cooks. As for women—(especially if unmarried) they are supposed to partake of the fabled nature of the chameleon, and to live on air.

Mr. Flagge's business had become less profitable than formerly; he made, however, no difference in the quantity or quality of the wine he drank—but he grumbled excessively at the bills for his wife's and daughter's personal expenses—and, in place of transmitting to Theresa her half yearly dividends, promised,

when the crisis should be over, full and regular payments.

The crisis, however, became a catastrophe: one fine morning, Mr. Flagge left his home rather earlier than usual, without announcing any uncommon intention; the dinner hour came and went, but no Mr. Flagge—the night passed away, and no Mr. Flagge: his wife became extremely alarmed, so did many persons who had dealings with his house. The lost gentleman was talked about, enquired for, advertized—but all in vain—no tidings reached his anxious family. Mrs. Flagge meditated weeds, and perhaps a second more attentive spouse, when a letter from New York apprised her that her present lord was still in being. His affairs were, he informed her, in a hopeless, irremediable condition. A few months longer and a disgraceful bankruptcy must have ensued; he had therefore thought proper to transfer himself to the land of freedom, where he wished his family to follow, bringing with them as much of his property as could be quickly got together.

This proved to be nothing: he was declared

insolvent; and his creditors, amongst whom was Theresa, received exactly fifteen pence in the pound. Nor was this her only trial—the bookseller, who had hitherto been her publisher, happened to be one of Mr. Flagge's assignees, and a loser, of course, to a considerable amount by the failure; and he henceforth withdrew the patronage he had, in fact, originally bestowed principally in consequence of his connexion with her uncle. But, as he did not wish unnecessarily to give offence, Mr. Franks couched his refusal of a work she tendered him in the most civil terms, alleging the fickleness of the public taste as an excuse for declining the offer: no one, he assured her, now read such works—poetry would be more likely to succeed. Little did the good-natured bookseller imagine he was writing to a poet—one who considered poetry as her forte; who had already written nearly as many sonnets as Lady — —: who had, at that very moment, lying in her desk, a poem more than two-thirds completed, and only thrown aside because persons, experienced in these matters, had assured her that people were not fond of reading poetry in these degenerate, tasteless days.

It was resumed with ardour—finished—forwarded for Mr. Franks' approval—and refused. Theresa's disappointment was, at first, intense ; for the imaginative writer links himself to the creations of his fancy, until they are a portion of his very being. Gradually, however, new hopes sprung up ; in declining her manuscript, Mr. Franks had spoken kindly of its merits (how often did Theresa read that passage in his letter) ; he said, too, that he never published works of that description ; then, its rejection was accounted for, fully accounted for ; and another bookseller might probably undertake to do what Mr. Franks would not. But to whom should she apply ? And through what medium ? Without a proper introduction would any London bookseller regard her application with a favourable eye ?

These were questions Theresa asked herself and her friends so often that, at length, with the exception of Major Berrington, they came to the resolution that a journey to town and a personal interview would be her best, indeed, her only, plan. To town, therefore, Theresa went, and met with a succession of disappoint-

ments, rendered more keen from the sort of vague hope engendered by the booksellers' promises to look over the manuscript, and undertake it, provided other engagements did not interfere. Thus weeks were spent. Theresa's funds were fast vanishing—she moved into a cheaper lodging—and into a cheaper yet: lived on tea and penny loaves; never left the house except on business, to save her clothes; still her poem was unpurchased, her purse nearly void.

Her endeavours to procure employment, as a governess or companion, proved as abortive as her literary hopes. One application only (to Mrs. Daymour) had succeeded, and our readers are acquainted with the issue of that negotiation. Theresa reached her miserable lodgings nearly beside herself with anxiety and care. She took out her manuscript, resolved to make one more trial to dispose of it, and then—aye and what then? What could she do? Where seek advice or succour? Poor, friendless, miserable Theresa!

Her spirit sickened, her heart grew faint; and, in the wildness of her misery, the wretched being almost wished for death. It seemed at

hand—her health was never strong—imaginative writers rarely have good health: their sensibilities are pitched too high—the ever-working mind exhausts its humbler helpmate; they are their own destruction, like the poor worm that from its entrails weaves its shroud!

Theresa had never enjoyed robust health, and now was sickness added to her many sorrows: anxiety, fatigue, and disappointment induced a severe attack of fever.

For some days her life hung in suspense; and it was doubtful whether she would ever leave the miserable bed on which she lay, ever again breathe the pure air, or gaze upon the cheerful sky. Those, however, whose bodily strength is below par, will sometimes struggle through illnesses fatal to the more robust; and, after three weeks of acute suffering, Theresa was pronounced convalescent, almost well.

Very mournful was her condition; no kind voice whispered words of hopefulness and peace—no friendly hand arranged the pillows, or proffered all those thousand nameless cares, so necessary and so grateful to the invalid: no glistening eye was raised in gratitude to Him,

who had preserved her from the grave. She was unsoothed—uncared for; and she sat alone in her comfortless apartment, the irritability of weakness still upon her; and the imagination, quickened at once and darkened by disease, presenting to her mind every threatened evil in exaggerated hues.

We read sometimes of broken hearts; pretty poetic things, no doubt, and perhaps, true. Broken spirits, at any rate, there are. Oh, yes! the spirit breaks, but not for love. Love is the dream of early youth, and the spirit breaks not then. Youth has in itself the elements of so much happiness; its energy, its hope, its *trust*, its fond belief that every thing is beautiful, that every one is true; and its warm affections, all give a buoyancy, an ever moving principle of joy—and though the spirit bows, it breaks not then.

It is in after years, when stern experience has become our teacher; when the bright glowing hue of hope has passed away, and in its place dark shadows fall; when all life's billows have swept over us, and each succeeding wave has left its furrow on the soul—oh, then it is the

spirit breaks, and all man's boasted energy gives way !

Theresa recovered, but it was only to encounter fresh difficulties ; for the dark horror of imprisonment was hanging over her. Her landlady must be paid ; the surgeon, who had attended her with skill, and even kindness, remunerated ; and her purse contained but a few shillings. She saw no resource but an appeal to friends, whose means, she knew, were little in accordance with their wishes ; and, after many struggles, this step, so repugnant to a mind endued with any sense of delicacy, was resolved upon, and taken, apparently without success. Three days elapsed since that on which she calculated receiving an answer to her application, and no tidings came.

CHAPTER XVIII.

"CHARLOTTE," said Jane Arnold addressing her sister, on leaving the vicarage at Atherley, where they had been calling—"When you are installed mistress of that house, I hope you will discard those curtains without loss of time."

"They are not pretty, certainly."

"Pretty! They are absolutely hideous—yellow, bright yellow—my eyes are nearly put out with looking at them: what could have induced poor dear Mrs. Beechcroft to chuse yellow damask for the furniture of a cottage, for, really, the vicarage is nothing more. She, too, who is, usually, so quiet in her manner and appearance; I should have judged Mrs.

Beechcroft is quite guiltl
deprecate so much, I ha
furniture was chosen l
rather, by his mother."

"Well, I hope you
them. Charlotte, will i
you to return to that dea

"My dearest Jane, I
it, at least not for, I true

"Why, Charlotte, w
living, you will, I suppo
the vicarage?"

"You forget, Jane, th
the living, his father
from us."

"You mean that the
before his son inherits hi
I intend a very different

"Staverton, will, probably, be vacant in the course of a few weeks, and Lord Lineageleigh gave it, at least, as far as he could give a living not positively free, to William."

"Together with Atherley, at some future period. But, dear Charlotte, Staverton is but a poor sort of thing, not above three hundred and fifty pounds a year?"

"We shall not be rich, Jane: now would it, perhaps, be wise to marry on so small an income, did we not look forward to something better—but with Atherley in the back-ground, we shall, I think, do very well; and affection must make up for our deficiency in wealth."

"Oh yes, people who are in love can live on air, and do all sorts of wonderful things. But, Charlotte, I don't think you *are* in love. We won't say anything about William, but you——"

"Why do you doubt my attachment?"

"Because you have none of the signs or symptoms peculiar to the case. You are as calm and placid as the river yonder—instead of which, you ought to be like that little noisy brook, sparkling and overflowing its banks. If

"My dear Jane, you rather than happiness—and still, both in its nature

"Then," continued you ought to be depressed

"Why?"

"Why, for fear any break off the engagement anxious for the accomplishment of our particular desire, we are a fear than hope."

"That is perfectly in my case there appears some—of William's affection doubt, Staverton will be are passed, and the present will, surely, not refuse uncle's intention. I know

"Mr. Beechcroft," observed the younger lady, "how grave and solemn you are looking."

"I have been engaged in a solemn office, the burial of my friend, my kind old friend——"

"True, Lord Lineageleigh's funeral took place, to-day: was it very grand?"

"It was an awful and imposing spectacle."

"I had a great fancy to go, and half persuaded Phoebe she would like it too—but my Aunt Rocket raised a host of objections, so I was obliged to give up my expedition, and content myself with paying a visit of etiquette with Charlotte at the vicarage."

"Not *etiquette*, I hope;" said William Beechcroft, in an under voice to his intended.

"What made you so anxious to attend the funeral, Jane?" enquired Maurice.

"Oh, I wanted to see how everything went off—whether the chief mourner looked as melancholy as he is in duty bound; if the service were properly performed," (here Jane looked archly at Mr. Beechcroft) "and, above all, to tell the dear, grim old monuments how much I love them."

"I think that latter clause the most rational

part of your expedition, at least it is there I could most easily sympathise with you."

"You are partial to those relics of the olden time, perhaps, from the chivalrous recollections connected with them?" asked William Beechcroft.

"No," replied Jane, "not on that account ; but because they do me good."

"Do you good?"

"Yes ; far more than sermons, or lectures, or exhortations. They make me *think*."

"All tombstones should do that."

"Yes, but they don't ; at all events, not in the manner these do. I can look at a modern effigy without being in the least reminded that all flesh is grass."

"I understand your feeling," rejoined William, "for something of the same nature has passed, at times, in my own mind : with all the beauty of modern monumental sculpture, I have often questioned, whether it conveys the idea of death with half the power of the old quaint effigies our forefathers have left us. There is too much animation, too much energy about the later productions of this description ;

it is life, not death, that they pourtray—life, in its struggle with mortality; life, in its resurrection from the grave; life, in its vigour, beauty, strength—the Warrior, the Orator, the gifted child of genius, stand before you, but it is as they were, or will hereafter be—not in their present state. But the older monument, with its perfect stillness, its calm repose, reminds us well of death as represented in the Scriptures.”

“And,” observed Charlotte, “how much more appropriate to a sinful being is the attitude chosen by the elder sculptors—the hands raised, as though imploring mercy, or the feet crossed, in memory of the symbol of our blessed faith.”

“What do you say,” asked Maurice, “to the entablatures covered with elaborate inscriptions, and setting forth in glowing terms the virtues, graces, and accomplishments of the deceased, as though the dust that sleeps beneath had been exempt from all the failings of mortality—and this, in the very Temple of that God in whose sight the Heavens are not pure, and who charges his angels with folly!”

“It is,” said William with emphasis, “an awful desecration, almost a blasphemous asper-

"We can only hope," remarking as these epitaphs are, usually near kindred of the deceased, of their affliction, they believe to have been really what describes."

"And what of that, Jane?" enquired.

"Why then they are sincere."

"My dear Jane," said Mr. Mordaunt, "it is a very specious, and at the same time a very dangerous notion—a man may be sincerely wrong in his opinions."

"Well," replied Jane, "for as long as the conversation was becoming far too serious, and when your turn comes, I suppose you will say, 'Here lies a Chatterbox.'"

"Jane, do not jest upon me."

"Yes," continued the young man, "I am serious."

"And what are they?" asked Maurice.

"Truth and originality—qualities rarely to be met with in either men, women, books, or epitaphs."

"Madcap," rejoined her brother, holding the gate while she passed through.

"Pray, Maurice, don't you think it rather singular William Beechcroft should have preferred Charlotte to me?"

"No, Jane, if you wish for my sincere opinion, I must acknowledge that I do not; Charlotte is more similar to him in tastes, feelings, and opinions, than you are."

"That's the very reason I marvel at his fixing on her. However, it's very fortunate he did not fancy me, for I never could have married him."

"Why?"

"Oh, he's so gloomy, and melancholy, always looks as if he had just been burying Lord Lineageleigh."

Maurice smiled—"My dear sister, William is sedate, sometimes perhaps, grave, as in my opinion is not unbecoming his profession—but he is neither gloomy nor melancholy."

same if we could only see ne
looks straight before her, as
approved custom of girls in love.

"Perhaps," said Maurice, "causes for anxiety, which might look grave."

Two days after, Charlotte and Jane sat together, but in a very low spirits. Charlotte looked worse than Jane vexed and sad.

"My dear Charlotte," she said, taking her sister's hand in hers, "when you ought not to feel so easy in yielding your engagement, how little I thought that I was speaking for you."
"And yet," replied Charlotte, "something told me there might be a remark; at least, when they

"Indeed, it would appear so."

"I wonder his uncle's ghost does not start up from the tomb and reproach him with his meanness—to sell a living that had been almost given away! I can forgive his not chusing to ratify the promise respecting Atherley, because, as he intends one of his own children for the church, it is natural he should retain the family living for him; but Staverton—it really is too bad."

"It is a very great disappointment, but I must seek to bear it with cheerfulness—such crosses are always messages of mercy."

"The engagement is not, however, broken off?"

"No, not yet, William will not hear of that, nor do his parents wish it; but I look upon our marriage now as almost hopeless."

"I think you had better marry on what you have—William will get something by and bye."

Charlotte shook her head.

"A long engagement is an odious business," continued Jane.

"But an improvident marriage worse;" cried Miss Rocket, who just then entered the room,

"and I hope Charlotte will not do anything so absurd and foolish."

"Oh, no," answered Charlotte, "I love William too well to be the means of plunging him into embarrassment and trial."

"Very right, Charlotte—spoken like a girl of sense and feeling; rely upon it there isn't one man in a hundred whose temper will stand the fuss and worry of supporting and educating a family without the proper means. But I wouldn't have you break off your engagement—do nothing rashly—wait a little, until we see whether something can't be done with this Lord Lineageleigh—he ought to be remonstrated with, and told how shamefully he's behaving. Indeed, I've half a mind to go and have a talk with him, myself."

"Oh, no, no," exclaimed Charlotte, "pray dont, my dear aunt, I entreat you will not; think of the strange effect such a proceeding on the part of one of my relations would occasion."

"Well, perhaps it is as well left alone, but I suppose old Mr. Beechcroft won't sit down quietly, and see his son defrauded in this scandalous manner—Jane, open the window,

and get a glass of water, quick, your sister's fainting."

"It is nothing, I shall be better in a minute, Jane, dearest, lend me your arm."

Jane supported her sister to their joint sleeping-room, and Rebecca remained ruminating on Charlotte's disappointment, and wondering how it happened that a niece of her's should feel that disappointment so severely. After all, Rebecca thought, it was most probably the weakness incidental on a recent attack of fever that rendered Charlotte so easily upset, and therefore, change of air and scene would be desirable; Maurice and she should go together to the sea. And, having come to this conclusion, Miss Rocket set off to visit Major Berrington, that she might inform him of Lord Lineageleigh's shabby conduct, and poor Theresa's most unfortunate condition, "not," said Rebecca, "that he can do any good, for he's not much better off himself, poor man, but it amuses him to hear all that goes on in the world."

"If I were you, Charlotte," again suggested Jane, "I would marry William, notwithstanding

you would have, for, o
would make his son so

“ This is William’s
indeed, I cannot, must
or you. My aunt is
calculated to bear hous
injury to their cheerfu

“ What is the reas
inconvenience and pri
can ?”

“ Perhaps, because
of less pliable mate
whilst our education
denial, their’s rather
indulgence. And, the
in spite of the populæ
there is no actual di
happiness enjoyed by

which would fail of interesting them, is in our favour ; it enables us to turn away our thoughts from causes of anxiety and grief, and to bear privation without murmuring. You know, I always maintain that occupation and happiness are almost synonymous."

" Yes, yes, that is a lesson you have often tried to inculcate on me—but not altogether with success, I fear, dear Charlotte. And now, to return to your affairs—is it not possible that, after all, there may be neither privation nor anxiety to sour William's temper, or affect your cheerfulness ? Why should he not get another living ? There are other people, besides Lord Lineageleigh, who have livings to give away, and surely some one may be found who will make amends for the injustice he has suffered."

" Alas, Jane, without interest or private friendship, there is, I fear, no hope."

" But he is considered so very clever, and, I am sure, has every other quality to make a good and popular clergyman. Charlotte, do not be cast down, rely upon it, he will find another patron."

" Not if my welfare is connected with his.

William will get nothing while our engagement stands," replied Charlotte, very mournfully.

"What do you mean, my dear sister?"

"That I am one of those persons who are not born to happiness, and therefore nothing in which I am concerned will ever prosper."

"Is not that too superstitious a remark to be the genuine opinion of my sensible Charlotte?"

"Yes, you may chide me for my superstition, nor will I endeavour to defend the weakness it betrays."

"You are exceedingly unwise in harbouring such thoughts, and still more in suffering them to influence your actions. If I were William Beechcroft, I should scold you well."

"I cannot help my folly; I find it, as the French say, 'stronger than myself;' indeed, so entirely has this conviction taken possession of my mind that it was but yesterday that some lines, expressive of similar feelings, were brought as powerfully to my experience as though I had been myself their author, or that they had been composed on purpose to describe my present state."

"What lines?" asked Jane.

“You know them well; indeed, they are familiar to everybody.”

‘Oh! ever thus, from childhood’s hour,
I’ve seen my fondest hopes decay;
I never lov’d a tree or flower,
But ’twas the first to fade away.
I never nurs’d a young gazelle,
To glad me with its soft black eye,
But, when it came to know me well,
And love me, it was sure to die!’

“Yes,” remarked Jane, when her sister had concluded, “those lines are very beautiful. But, Charlotte, why do you apply poor Hinda’s pathetic lamentation to yourself?”

“Because the experience of my life, alas, only too well agrees with hers. To *you*, my mother’s death was comparatively no loss, because you were too young to know her worth, or love her excellencies; *I* could feel and mourn for both. Then Maurice, my twin brother, bound to me by a tie mysterious and beyond the comprehension of such as are not similarly linked, is unhappy, suffering, ill—perhaps—” Charlotte’s voice failed, she could not bring herself to utter the apprehension of his impending danger; it seemed as though to give

weeks ago, how flattering were everything promised ease and our engagement had not then taken place, and suddenly all under Lord Lineageleigh, his friend and not of age or of a lingering and a few hours' illness his existence so unexpectedly that he has not to William the living he had a few words to his next heir and upon the subject, and those Does it not appear as if my father his?"

"I would not suffer myself any rate, I do hope you will William for so fanciful a reason

"No, I will do nothing present, the engagement will

are not many men whose affection will stand the test of a protracted engagement. A deferred marriage is, therefore, little better than an entire breach of the connexion."

"And that," rejoined Jane, "is precisely the reason, why, if I were in your place, I should marry William Beechcroft, in spite of prudence and my Aunt Rebecca."

"But not in defiance of better principles; for, independent of other considerations, you are aware, his parents would not countenance the marriage as we are at present situated."

Jane laughed, "I am afraid my principles would take a lower ground than yours, Charlotte; and I sometimes fancy I should be all the happier for it."

"Hush, hush, I will not hear you say what, I am confident, you do not really think."

But Jane did think it; and, perhaps, so far as this world only carries us, she was not altogether wrong; duty is a very thorny path. But even amidst the briars there are roses to be found, and Charlotte Arnold, in the painful line of conduct she saw herself called upon by duty to pursue, derived support from the con-

viction she was acting right ; and that, however William now might chafe and murmur under her decision, the hour would come when he would thank her for the firmness that at present she displayed.

Reader, have you never felt as Charlotte Arnold did ? When you have seen the objects you most fondly prized, by turn removed, has it not seemed to you that your affection brought a blight with it ?

THE END OF VOL. II.

JANET

OR

GLANCES AT HUMAN NATURE.

THE SECOND OF
A SERIES OF TALES ON THE PASSIONS:

BY
THE AUTHOR OF "MISREPRESENTATION."

———And had she then no virtues,
Was she not wise, and chaste, and true?
———Oh no; envy had tainted all:

Like the foul worm that crawls and leaves it soil and noisomeness,
Marring the wholesome fruit.

OLD PLAY.

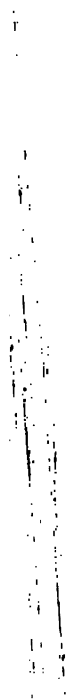
All Tales should have a moral. A Tale without a moral is just as useless as an
unroofed house—a bankrupt's bond—an M. P.'s conscience—or a fine lady.


M.S.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

LONDON
SAUNDERS AND OTLEY, CONDUIT STREET
1839





TO

THE LADY HENNIKER

THESE VOLUMES

ARE


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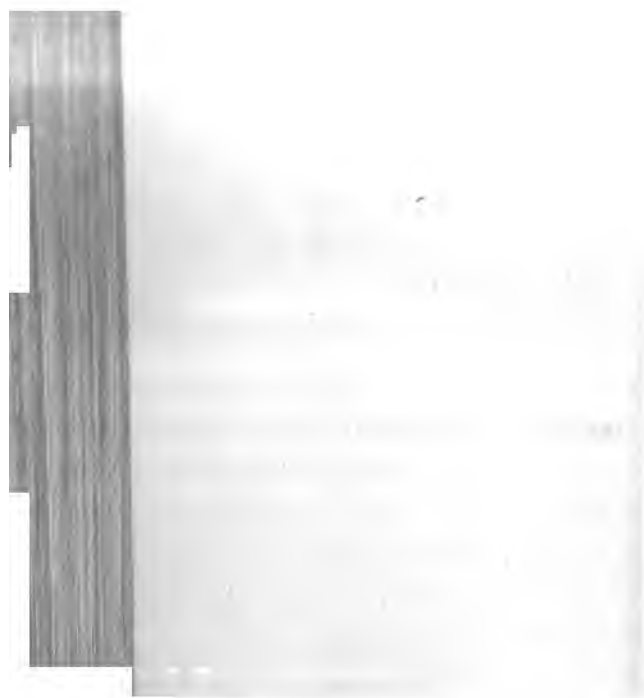
WITH THE

GRATEFUL ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

OF

THE AUTHOR.





JANET;
OR
GLANCES AT HUMAN NATURE.

CHAPTER I.

It is not my purpose to describe a gay London life, that strange mixture of excitement and ennui—of lassitude and pleasure. Georgina plunged into the vortex, not so much that the pursuit of dissipation was peculiarly congenial to her taste, but because it pleased Perceval, who thus found himself entirely at liberty, and because, as Lady Gertrude eschewed late hours, and heated, crowded rooms—to seek them was a certain means of deliverance from her society.

She was exceedingly admired—her ignorance of the conventional rules of society gradually wore off, and with it the shyness so disadvantageous to her; and even were she still guilty of an occasional *gaucherie*, it was far less observed and commented upon in the extensive circle of London *haut ton*, than had been formerly the case in the more restricted limit of a country neighbourhood.

Following Janet's insidious advice, Georgina spared no expense to enhance her personal advantages; an elegant and fashionable wardrobe superseded her former scanty, ill-chosen one. She had always been beautiful, and now, no longer veiled by an unbecoming style of dress, her loveliness became transcendent. For, let people say what they will, a pretty woman is always ten times prettier for being dressed with taste, and according to the prevailing notions of fashion. As may be supposed, Lady Gertrude remonstrated much and frequently, but entirely in vain: there were too

many voices on the other side ; Perceval, whose vanity was pleased that his wife's taste and beauty should be equally admired ; Lady Kingsbury, who liked to talk of her niece as the beautiful and fashionable Mrs. D'Esterre ; and Janet, well aware that, however Perceval might approve now, it would be widely different when the bills came pouring in.

"What *is* all this about ?" said D'Esterre, rising from his lounging posture on a sofa in the inner drawing-room, whilst, in the other, Lady Gertrude was delivering her accustomed exhortation about economy, and Georgina gently, but firmly, maintaining her resolution of purchasing a shawl, then the fashion, and consequently very expensive. "What shawl is that you cannot possibly do without, Georgy ?"

Georgina explained ; and Lady Gertrude, with some emphasis, mentioned the price.

"But that is a very pretty shawl you had on yesterday," observed Perceval, in a tone of

of money for a thing which, if you will be able to buy for her, I shall have joined Lady Gertrude.

"But then," replied George, "longer be fashionable."

"Ah," said Perceval, as he said aloud, "that fashion is the ruin."

The idea of possessing the thing was instantly abandoned: it was evident, she felt, that Perceval objected to an expensive purchase; with hesitation, therefore, she reluctantly consented. And this was done with a timid air some ladies would have considered themselves privileged to assume in so great an act of self-denial. Her temper and cheerfulness

after dinner that evening, Lady Gertrude took occasion to refer to the subject, and, having expressed her satisfaction at the result of the debate, proceeded to assume the entire merit of that fortunate conclusion to her own prudent counsels and judicious influence, Georgina glanced towards her husband with so much arch playfulness that he could not refrain from smiling; and, more than ever gratified, he sallied forth on the ensuing morning, and made the purchase of a shawl, answering as closely as possible to the one Georgy had wished to have, and for which, although greatly inferior in texture, he paid a far higher price than she meditated giving; so that, in truth, Lady Gertrude had little cause for self-congratulation.

It need hardly be mentioned that Mrs. D'Esterre never looked more beautiful than when, for the first time, she threw the graceful folds of her recent acquisition around her finely moulded form; for the reflection that it was a token of Perceval's affection added fresh

lustre to her brilliant eyes—and gave an air of joy and happiness to her whole appearance which, latterly, had not been often visible.

Not many days after, while languid and weary from a night spent in dissipation, Georgina was sitting listless and alone, a letter from Miss Rocket was put into her hand.

“MY DEAR GEORGINA,

“I dare say you are wondering you have not heard from Atherley lately, especially, as you may have seen in the papers that your cousin Belinda's marriage took place about a fortnight since: it was a very gay business, much gayer than yours—and I don't know how it was, but, although we none of us liked the marriage, we were all glad when it was over. For my own part, I must acknowledge it has taken no little anxiety from my mind, for Belinda's romantic folly always kept me in hot water; I never knew what tom-foolery she would be doing next. Well, she is married now, and will, I dare say, make a very good, proper-behaved wife; for, it is a certain fact that many of the wildest girls have turned out quiet, sober wives: and I feel more sanguine on this score

because, Belinda, after crying and making the greatest possible piece of work on finding she would be held to her engagement, seemed all of a sudden to change her mind and think Mr. Pratt everything that is charming. I've a great notion, a certain set of garnets and topazes (did you ever hear of such a mixture?) had something to do with the metamorphosis.

"The happy couple set off in their own carriage (blue, picked out, and lined with red), on a tour, and will be in town somewhere about the fifteenth. I hope you will see a good deal of Belinda, and introduce her to some of your acquaintances; for, although Mr. Pratt talks a great deal of all the fine folks he knows, I don't quite believe all he says. Their house is called 'Willow Villa,' Camberwell—and, as you have a carriage, it would be as well if you were to drive there, and make some enquiry as to when they are expected.

"The wedding was, as I told you, a very gay one; but poor Charlotte was so unwell as to be unable to get to church: her illness proved scarletina, and went through the house, so I and Nancy Browne (the maid), have had enough to do, nursing—we were the only persons who escaped. This is the reason none of us wrote before, and that you have not received your cake—now there is no use sending it. Charlotte was the only one

hear that poor Miss Flagge has
but disasters in London. She
instance, to the place where Bel
but found it too expensive, for
sell her MS.; no bookseller wo
I must say, I think very strange
numbers of booksellers there ar
yesterday, came a letter, saying
greatest distress, having been il
no probability of getting rid o
only anxious to return here;
has neither the means of doing
her rent. She lodges at No. 1
street; where you must go an
her the enclosed from me.
brother, he is anxious to assist
ly, can do so little, being
hampered, that I really do not
end; unless, indeed, you, &
Belinda, can contrive between
from her diffen

ought to be '*Les absens ont toujours tort*,' and I think I have improved it: an absent man might, perhaps, find some friend who would stand up for him, but all the world agree in running down the unsuccessful.

"The fact is, people never judge an undertaking by its own merits, or the motive that induced it—they form their opinion by the result. If success crown your exertion, you were right in making it—if the reverse, your conduct has been rash and ill-advised. Had Miss Flagge accomplished the purpose of her journey to town, we should have heard of nothing but her talents and judgment. But, she has failed—and therefore is blamed even by those who recommended the measure.

"Ah, well, this is a very crooked world, and very crooked ways have those who dwell in it: but I expect better things from you, Georgina, and shall therefore hope soon to hear that you have been able to do something effectual for this unfortunate being.

"Good bye, lose no time in seeing Theresa, and let me hear from you. By the way, why do you write so seldom? your father has no pleasure equal to that of hearing from you—all send love.

"Ever your affectionate,

Atherley, Thursday.

"REBECCA ROCKET."

if you cannot help her v
in the King's Bench soon

Great was Georgina
a communication which
was disagreeable, so
possible to comply v
had been inserted on
paper, this was then
she received of the
undesirable event ;
her introducing, into
gina knew no other)
it was an absolute
was to be done for
assistance was diffic
own capabilities w

fancy, with the understanding that the bills shall remain over for some months, and tendering assistance in hard cash. Neither could she hope to gain subscribers for the unfortunate Theresa's work,—she was not an influential person—and although she had many acquaintances, beyond the limits of her own family circle, she had not a single friend. There would be even a difficulty in accomplishing a visit to Theresa, for it was exceedingly unlikely that Lady Gertrude D'Esterre, who drove out daily, and invariably insisted on directing their route, would chuse to be driven to Shoe Lane.

Still something must be done—some effort made to extricate the unhappy poetess from her trying situation—to fulfil Miss Rocket's injunctions, which, from long habit, were considered by Georgina as positive commands.

She did not, however, require such a stimulus: Theresa's painful position would have called forth the sympathy of a less affectionate being than Georgina, who was besides attached

gazing round the apartment, & many costly trifles so indicative which was, yet was not, hers.

“I am but a cipher, after all,” tally. “I can do nothing, absolutely. “I can do nothing, absolutely (as, on hearing Lady Gertrude’s she folded up and put away the will Perceval think, when he cousin married to a fishmonger not only living in Shoe Lane, I be sent to the King’s Bench him—I never shall find counsel him about it.”

In truth, Georgina did lack courage; partly from her nature partly from her education. done to strengthen a character

affection—that now she dreaded even the expression of indifference; she quailed beneath an unkind look; turned from the prospect of annoyance—even as a hothouse flower shrinks from the chilling blast.

Georgina pondered much and weariedly over her perplexities. The longer she thought upon the subject, the greater appeared the difficulty of making Mr. D'Esterre acquainted with the contents of Rebecca's letter: all at once she recollected they were to dine that day with Lady Kingsbury, and she gladly caught at the pretext for delay; she would speak to Janet, try to interest Sir Marcus, perhaps Lady Kingsbury herself, good-natured Lady Kingsbury, might be induced to take the matter up—and then an application for Perceval's co-operation would be comparatively easy.

CHAPTER II.

ON the following morning Gertrude was alone ; for Lady Gertrude was in the habit of spending a couple of hours in the afternoon, with an invalid friend or two ; and, if possible, Mrs. D'Amville's mind was even more desponding than on the preceding day. Her husband's return from the Kingsbury party had been abortive. Lady Kingsbury, in pity, and promised to take a

scription, but in so completely a '*pour vos beaux yeux*' manner (of course my readers know that anecdote by heart), that Georgina hesitated whether she were justified in accepting the donation. Janet, to whom she made a very strong appeal, was, "just now too poor to give anything away—" and yet Janet had a much larger allowance than even many girls of rank; but she loved money, and never parted with it excepting to gratify herself.

Georgina was startled from her reverie by a carriage driving up to the door, and, before she had time to deny herself, for, in truth, she was in no mood to receive visitors, Mrs. Gustavus Pratt was announced—and a mass of lilac, pink and green glided into the room. There was real joy in the tone of Georgina's voice on recognising her cousin; here was an able coadjutor in her painful task; one, too, who might probably be able to do all *she* wished, but could not; for, surely, the fishmonger would not, at any rate, look down upon the author; and, since

less than in Georgina's case.

"When did you reach to Georgina.

"On Tuesday," replied Be dropping into a pile of easy came on Tuesday; I should have or have sent to have inform arrival, but I really was so travelling, I was obliged to lay

"Was your journey a very ra

"Oh yes; we travelled imme sixty miles, yes actually sixty mi I was completely exhausted, an I feared he must be tired of wasn't fair of me to say so—i but I like to teaze him sometir

"I should hardly have thoug

am," said Belinda, opening her embroidered reticule and taking thence a large, gaudy looking vinaigrette.

"You used not formerly to complain of weakness."

"Oh yes, I was always delicate. At present however, I fear I must confess, I do not make all the exertion I might; for my dear Gustavus watches over me with so much tenderness—and pets me to such a degree that I shall be quite spoiled.—He is so fond of me it is really perfectly ridiculous," replied Belinda, with an affected laugh.

"It must be very delightful to be beloved;" said Georgina sadly, and only half aloud—never had Perceval thus watched over her.

"Oh, he is the most devoted husband; absolutely adores me—studies every wish; and then his liberality is really quite lavish."

"I rejoice to hear it," answered Georgina with the most perfect sincerity.

"Yes; he is the most generous of mortals.

he will not tell me what house will soon be a con- satisfied with it as I found yesterday, therefore, was ornamental furniture; and I was occupied with making my wardrobe—or, indeed you would have seen me

“I suppose you have home?” enquired George

“No; I had one letter—but I read the letter remember what was the colds,” (she coughed like a cold at this season of

“It was something Charlotte has been

to her vinaigrette) "scarlet fever—scarlet fever—how very unlucky; you know, I might have caught it."

"If you had, I dare say Mr. Pratt would have nursed you with all tenderness," replied Georgina, coldly.

"But so disfiguring!—no—I had rather not read the letter, it might convey infection, and I would not for the world have an illness now; just in the very midst of the season."

"Do you mean to enter much into company?"

"*Cela depend*—but one thing I have quite resolved upon, and that is to be exceedingly particular in whom I visit; I mean to admit none but fashionable people to my acquaintance."

Georgina looked at Belinda to ascertain whether she were in earnest, and perceiving no token to the contrary, answered,

"It is not very easy to gain admittance into high society—really fashionable people are extremely exclusive."

"Of course they are; but I conceive that

persons living in a certain style, I mean, who keep their carriage and man servant—give dinners and so on—would gain admittance anywhere.”

“ I fear you will hardly find it so.”

“ Are not *you* in fashionable society?”

“ I believe so—but Perceval’s connexions—”

“ Ah well, we shall see. At any rate, I will never patronize vulgar people,” rejoined Belinda; who, since her marriage with a fish-monger, had entirely dropped the “romantic” and assumed the “fine.” Perhaps she considered the latter more in keeping with her new character. But whether she thought proper to enact the sentimental country girl, or the affected town lady, her vanity and egotism remained the same.

“There is, at all events, one old friend who would feel much hurt at being struck out of your list.”

“Who is that?—Lord Olivius Yerfourd?”

“Lord Olivius Yerfourd! Oh no; what could make you think of Lord Olivius Yerfourd?”

"I don't know; but you talked of an old friend—and you must remember what a violent friendship he conceived for me. But who is this old friend? Captain Slycer? I have not quite made up my mind whether to visit his wife or not, but I suppose I must. Really persons who drive their carriage are heavily taxed, they cannot plead the excuse of distance; so I suppose I must drop my card; what sort of creature is she?"

"I have never met Mrs. Slycer."

"Never met Mrs. Slycer? How very strange! —I should have thought, you must know everybody, by sight, at least."

"Theresa is the friend to whom I alluded."

"Miss Flagge? Dear, is she still in London? What keeps her here so long? It is very provoking; such a quizzical looking person has no business in town. Pray what is she about?"

"I believe she would gladly return to Atherley; but, unhappily, has not the means: however, I trust, my dear Belinda, you will be

Why do you apply to me?"

"Because, as you are so rich you cannot have much entrenchment of income; and as Mr. Pratt is so rich——"

"You labour under a mistake. I certainly all kindness, and we are considered well off, neither have we but the expense of such an education is immense, and I really have thrown away."

"Assisting a fellow creature in throwing away money; and when a creature is an old friend—one who has received kindness, to end her misfortune is not an act of duty."

who seemed so much taken with her, would be the proper person."

"You forget that you and I were married under different circumstances. I brought my husband no fortune whatever; in connexion, education, everything, I was the inferior. Besides, his liberality has already been severely tested on my dear father's behalf; and therefore I find great difficulty in making a second appeal. But with you, it is far otherwise."

"I see no such wonderful difference," said Belinda, highly affronted at the comparison Georgina had unwarily drawn between their respective marriages. "At any rate, it appears very hard that, because I did not make quite so great a match as you did, I am expected to pay for the absurdities and follies of a half mad woman."

"Oh, Belinda, Theresa is not mad."

"I think her conduct looks very like it."

"Will you read your aunt's letter?"

Belinda took the packet, and the scowl upon

“How very shocking a

“Wrong?”

“Yes, to be running in
always lecturing other people
cannot encourage such
think it right—it is quite
principles.”

“Shall I transmit to
Rocket?”

Belinda hesitated—she
her aunt. “Where does

“In Shoe Lane. Are
there? If so, I would

“Shoe Lane! Do you
myself in such a place
frightened out of my life

“In your carriage then

man not know the way. Oh no, I could not possibly go to such a place; but I will send my maid."

"Rather let me be your almoner. I shall certainly call upon Theresa, and will gladly be the bearer of anything you wish to give; it will be more delicate, and less painful to her feelings to receive your assistance through me, than through a servant," urged Georgina earnestly while Belinda listened with an air of great vexation. She did not entertain the least intention either of sending her maid, or of bestowing the veriest trifle upon poor Theresa, but, impelled by the dread of Miss Rocket, she again opened her reticule, and, unclasping a green and yellow purse, took thence two half sovereigns.

"All the gold I have about me," she said, tendering the coins to Georgina, "and it would not be ladylike to offer silver. When her work comes out I shall expect a copy."

Georgina felt almost as much reluctance to

accept this paltry donation as she had experienced when appealing to Sir Marcus Kingsbury. But in Theresa's unhappy circumstances even a gift thus trifling might not be refused—the sovereign was, therefore, placed in her purse, and she was glad the necessity of thanking the mean-spirited donor was prevented by a remark from Belinda on the size of the apartment. “It was small, very small, much smaller than the drawing-room at Willow Villa; indeed both the rooms would go into one of theirs—a very sweet place that Willow Villa, a very sweet place, indeed.”

“Is Willow Villa your own?”

“Yes; no—that is to say it is our own for the present; it belongs to a Mr. Rose Vere—extremely fashionable people, but extravagant; got into debt, every body seems to be in debt.” Concluded Belinda, very pointedly.

“And he sold the house to you?”

“Not exactly; he owed our house three hundred pounds; and Pratt, who is the most kind-

hearted liberal creature in the world, instead of immediate payment, agreed to occupy the place for five years as a sort of liquidation of the debt."

"Is it well furnished?"

"Yes, beautifully. Gustavus, however, has added a great deal; and the garden is the most complete thing I ever saw; conservatory—hot-house—everything you could wish for. There is but one objection, the distance—it certainly is rather out of the way—the distance is considerable——"

"From Mr. Pratt's shop, I suppose?" said Georgina, perfectly out of patience.

Belinda coloured, but, affecting not to hear, continued—"It, certainly, is too far from everything, and I have half a mind to induce Gustavus (dear Gustavus will do anything I wish) to come into town."

"You would scarcely meet with a house on the same favourable terms."

"Oh, but the Villa will let well, I have no

doubt : indeed, to say the truth, at the very time my husband agreed to take it, there was a gentleman, a very intimate friend of Pratt's, who would gladly have rented it for three hundred a year ; but, of course, Gustavus said nothing of that to Mr. Rose Vere."

"I conclude not," observed Georgina.

"But you must judge for yourself. Pray come soon, and bring Mr. D'Esterre, I long to make him acquainted with my Gustavus—and, by the way, I must not forget to leave my husband's card, with my own for Lady Gertrude."

"Pray do not—both are quite unnecessary."

"True ; between relations there should be no ceremony — do, therefore, express our joint wishes to cultivate the acquaintance."

Georgina received this flattering assurance in silence ; it was impossible to avow any reciprocal anxiety upon the subject.

"Pray," cried Belinda, from the window where she had stationed herself, "Who is your opposite neighbour?"

"The dowager countess of G——."

"Is that her carriage at the door?"

"Probably."

"Well, I can't say I think much of it. Too plain a great deal—not to be compared with ours; and that reminds me you have never seen our carriage; do come and tell me what you think of it."

Georgina, thus appealed to, walked also to the window, and thence beheld the blue and red vehicle, already mentioned by Miss Rocket. Praise was impossible. "Is it your choice?"

"Mine, oh no—it is P——'s taste; P—— chose it entirely himself; is it not very chaste and elegant? Ah—there is Lady G., I suppose—a very ordinary looking person—her dress, at least, is the commonest, plainest looking thing I ever saw."

"Lady G. always dresses with simplicity. But she is universally admired for her elegance of manners and graceful appearance. She is

considered the very perfection of *bon ton*."

"For my part," rejoined Belinda, viewing herself with infinite complacency in the large pier glass—"I see nothing remarkable about her; excepting that her dress is mean and shabby, and not to be compared with mine.—But I am, really, losing all the morning.—Farewell; my kind remembrances to Perceval and Lady Gertrude."

Thus saying, the fascinating Belinda fluttered out of the room.

CHAPTER III.

GEORGINA felt as if awaking from a night-mare dream when her silly relative departed ; but her after reflections were anything but pleasing, for it was now quite evident that on her alone poor Theresa's escape from incarceration depended—and what assistance could she render ?—a few sovereigns constituted all her ready money, and even here there must be a limitation, a portion only might she venture to bestow. Still it would be something, when added to the three sovereigns she had begged, and Rebecca's five pound note : some trinkets, too (not Perceval's

gifts), might be disposed of; that, however would require consideration. Meanwhile, she must see Theresa without loss of time; that very afternoon the visit must be paid, and, as she thought it highly improbable, Lady Gertrude would admire driving in so plebeian a direction, Georgina deemed it advisable at once to give notice of her intended route.

"Shoe-lane — Shoe-lane! exclaimed the astonished Lady Gertrude. Pray Mrs. D'Esterre, may I enquire what can possibly carry you to Shoe-lane?"

"I am going to pay a visit."

"Impossible—it is quite out of the question. Who can there be residing in such a place that is a fit acquaintance for my son's wife? I beg you will relinquish the idea of doing anything so highly improper."

"I see no impropriety in calling upon a person whose respectability is beyond a question," faltered Georgina, "and, indeed, I must go."

"Respectability of a person living in Shoe-lane! Mighty respectable indeed, I dare say. Who is this *very* respectable person, and desirable acquaintance?"

"Miss Flagge," again faltered Georgina.

"Oh," said Lady Gertrude, "the person who was at Ringland, I presume?"

"The same."

"She might, if the meeting be absolutely necessary, which I own I consider very doubtful, take the trouble of coming here, I should imagine."

"She is ill—unable to leave the house, and I must go to her," replied Georgina, becoming almost excited.

Lady Gertrude rang the bell.

"Is Mr. D'Esterre at home?"

"Yes, my lady."

"Tell him, luncheon is ready."

Perceval rarely ate luncheon; but he obeyed the summons, and was informed of his lady's meditated impropriety.

“And where, in the

“Somewhere near I

“You will have a
drive, Georgy,” said I
time helping himself to

“Disagreeable! So
greeable, I think,” ret

Nothing more was
announced, when, see
she intended to drive
repeated her intention

“It is quite out of
visit to pay at Che
direction. Miss Flag
a note; if, as you say
urgent.”

“A note will not

"Won't to morrow do as well? Can't you put it off for one day?"

"It would avail nothing—Lady Gertrude's objection is to the visit itself, there would, therefore, be as much difficulty to-morrow, as to-day."

"Well, then, I see nothing for it but my cab."

"Will you take me there?" asked Georgina, with infinite surprise.

"Yes, if you really must go."

"I am so much obliged."

"Make haste—get your bonnet on—we have no time to lose. I suppose we shall be, at least, six hours."

"Oh, no, no, Perceval, it cannot be so far as that."

Georgina was speedily equipped. Mr. D'Esterre handed his mother into the chariot, and then turned his horse's head towards the city.

Forlorn and miserable, Theresa sat in her

lonely chamber. Her luckless poem, once again rejected, lay before her on the table—and she remained with her head leaning on her emaciated hand, sometimes revolving in her mind wild and chimerical schemes by which she was to extricate herself from her many difficulties ; at others, contrasting her present wretchedness with the comfortable home she had once enjoyed.

A tap at the door, very gentle, and very unlike the usual manner of her landlady's demanding entrance, roused her from her reverie.

"Come in," she said, hastily brushing away the tears that had been flowing down her pallid cheeks ; "come in—another application for the rent, I fear."

The door unclosed, and Georgina, with a sweet, yet saddened, smile, light step, and expression of kind greeting, entered the apartment. Not much was said on either side ; Georgina felt awkward and embarrassed—she was only too painfully aware of the inadequacy

of the assistance she had it in her power to bestow; while Theresa, from motives of delicacy, spoke little of her trials. Still, was it comfort to the invalid to know that she was pitied—felt for—and she sat gazing on that fair being who had come like a bright sun-beam to her darkened chamber, with feelings nearer akin to happiness than she had experienced for many a weary day.

About twenty minutes had elapsed, when the unmusical stair-case announced the approach of an intruder; and Theresa, in constant dread of duns and bailiffs, turned pale, and started.

“It is only Perceval,” said Georgina; “do not be alarmed, I know his footstep. You will see him, dear Theresa?”

“Oh, no; not *here*—not now—I cannot, indeed. This room—I cannot see him in this wretched place.”

But Mr. D’Esterre, whose stock of mortal patience was completely exhausted, after a

gentle knock, opened the door; and, apologising for his intrusion, advanced towards Theresa, whom he shook kindly by the hand. Probably, this was the first time the elegant Perceval D'Esterre had ever found himself in so miserable an abode; yet he manifested more concern than astonishment—for, although he had never witnessed, he had read of the melancholy fate so often theirs who seek to win life by their wits.

Not only did Perceval effectually suppress any mortifying expression, but he contrived to impart to the distressed Theresa some portion of his perfect ease of manner. The conversation was, in fact, less restrained than previous to his entrance; and when Theresa found herself once more alone, all her gloomy visions and forebodings were dispelled—and she could hope—yes—hope, bright and cheering things. Mr. D'Esterre had made enquiries respecting her luckless poem; and, learning it had, hitherto, been productive only of disappointment, coun-

selling a subscription, promised to interest his friends, and bespoke ten copies, for which he, forthwith, wrote a draft upon his banker.

Theresa, therefore, once more gave herself up to those delightful visions that cheat young authors, often to their ruin. The object of her journey was, she thought, accomplished. She saw herself successful, and possessed of the means of ensuring an independence; and, what was almost as dear to her romantic fancy—crowned with applause, and owned by fame!

But Mr. D'Esterre's benevolence was of that inert nature which requires constant stimulating. Whilst in actual contact, the sight of so much distress and suffering affected him painfully; but a few short hours, and the impression wore away: excepting, therefore, some articles of dress, and a note from Georgina, reminding Theresa of her promise of calling in Grosvenor-street, she heard nothing further on the subject; and all her new-born hopes became a dismal blank.

But, when we have not by our own folly or misconduct invoked misfortune, we seldom remain long unbefriended: for, even in this chilly, blighting world, there may yet be found some noble spirits, some feeling hearts (I know of one, a true, warm, Irish heart it is), whose active benevolence, and real Christian philanthropy form a bright contrast to the calculating selfishness, and hard indifference, so characteristic of the present day.

Such a spirit lodged in Lady Charlotte H—'s breast; she learnt something of Theresa's desolate condition from the medical man who had attended her in her recent illness; and, finding, upon enquiry, no blame could be attached to the unhappy author, became a warm and true friend. Under her patronage, the oft rejected poem *did*, at length, appear in print; and was favourably, very favourably, received. But Lady Charlotte's benevolence went farther; aware of the precarious nature of the gains of authorship, she persuaded Theresa to relinquish

the pursuit, and accept, instead, the situation of companion to a lady, possessing, at once, discernment to appreciate talent (which, entre nous, reader, everybody has not), and feelings warm enough to render her careful of wounding those of others; and there Theresa is as happy as a person similarly circumstanced can be, and far more comfortable than even in her former days of independence, when she lodged over Mrs. Slopewell's shop, and enjoyed the prospect of the Bell Inn stable yard.

CHAPTER IV.

"I OBSERVE," said Belinda to her husband, "that the drawing-room is fixed for the fourteenth."

"Well, my dear, and what of that?"

"Only, that I must begin to see about my dress."

"Your dress? What are you thinking about?"

"The drawing-room to be sure; what should I be thinking about?"

"Oh, I suppose you want to see the company—well, I dare say it can be managed."

"To see the company? Oh dear, no, that is not my intention—I mean to be presented."

"Presented! Why, Belinda, you're making game of me."

"Far from it; Georgina has been to Court, and I see no reason why I should not go."

"I see several: in the first place, who is to present you? The Lady Mayoress?"

"The Lady Mayoress! No, indeed, I should not think of being presented by her—Georgina will present me."

"Mrs. D'Esterre?"

"Yes; Lady Gertrude D'Esterre presented her, and she will, of course, do the same for me. Relations always present each other; and if you take my advice, Gustavus, you will attend the levee, and make Perceval introduce you."

Gustavus shook his head. "Have either Mr. or Mrs. D'Esterre called here yet?"

"No," replied Belinda, in rather an under tone.

"Then, until they do, I should not advise your seeking any further civility from them."

Belinda replied by
dering the carriage
Mr. Pratt, finding fu
shrugged his shoulder
for the city; while
long strip of calico to
stitute for a Court t
walking gracefully a
curtesies before a lo

Now, it happen
Georgina, little sus
had in store for h
Kingsbury and Jan
the purpose of sele
wearing at the a
and, while Miss I
the various articles

Suddenly, she saw, from the window near which she stood, Belinda's carriage evidently making for the house, in obedience to the directions which Mrs. Pratt, with her hand upon the check-string, and her head projecting from the window, was screaming out.

"What can Belinda mean to do? Surely she is not coming here!" mentally exclaimed Georgina; "I do believe she is." And forthwith, Mrs. D'Esterre was seized with a fit of prudent irresolution.

"Yes," she said, in answer to an observation of Madame Regnier's on the beauty of the article, she was anxiously recommending; "it is exceedingly beautiful, and the colour finer than any I have ever seen; but I cannot decide to-day—to-morrow, I will call again and fix my choice. My dear aunt, I have detained you too long; I am sure, you must be out of all patience."

"Not at all; I am always glad to make myself of use, so do not hurry away on my account."

counter, ran down :
regard the etiquette
age, rank, or relations

Mrs. Pratt had :
carriage had drawn :
she had alighted, :
Regnier's house just
reaching Lady King

" My dear Georgi
equipage ; " what m
hurry ? Is it becaus
better part of valour

" I don't know in
some difficulty, for :
the exact truth. " :
time, and really Ma
exorbitant ; at any

him, by all means," rejoined Lady Kingsbury; who began to suspect that a little more confidence, even as regarded trifling subjects, between Georgina and her husband, would be desirable: "cousult him, by all means; and if you can get him to chuse your dress for you, do it; men have frequently better taste in women's dress than we have ourselves — therefore take his opinion and advice."

"I would not, if I were in your place," remarked Janet, but in too low a voice to catch Lady Kingsbury's attention.

"By the bye, Janet," enquired Lady Kingsbury, after a brief silence; "did you happen to observe that strange looking person whom we passed upon the staircase, just now? I never saw any one so oddly dressed in all my life; it's quite impossible she can belong to our class, and yet it strikes me I have seen the face before."

"So I thought; but I cannot conceive where it can have been. If we had met her anywhere

ing their dresses at Madame's
Janet ; while Georgina silen
herself that, not being suppo
Belinda, she was not called up
the acquaintance, or, rather,
she felt she was acting di
although the conviction ga
wanted courage to come fo
avow the truth.

The following day, on her r
out, a fantastically folded not
hand, and there concealed v
cumspection as was ever b
forbidden lover. It ran thus

“ MY DEAR GEORGINA

“ I write these few lines
at your house, in case I am no
to find you at home ; for I am

be ready at your door. I have all but bespoken my dress, white—but not entirely of that virgin hue—I thought it would appear too bride-like and assuming, so my train is to be looped with knots of rose colour and silver, and I shall wear a plume of pink feathers in my hair. Farewell.

“Your affectionate,

Willow Villa, Wednesday.

“BELINDA.”

Georgina was extremely annoyed—Belinda in a court dress, in a plume of pink feathers—the lady of a fishmonger intruding herself into the presence of the sovereign, and *she*, the means, the instrument of so flagrant an anomaly! The thing was utterly impossible, not even to be thought of.

“MY DEAR BELINDA,

“I am sorry I cannot accede to your wish respecting the drawing-room; I shall not be there myself. I regret also that I have been as yet unable to call upon you; the truth is that, while Lady Gertrude remains with us, I cannot always command the carriage; still, I hope soon to find my way to Willow Villa.

“Yours affectionately,

“GEORGINA D'ESTERRE.”

Grosvenor-street, Wednesday.

and folded up her coat—
does she say? Will she

“No,” said his lady
nasty, ill-natured, spiteful

“I told you so; you
—another time, perhaps
I say.”

“That’s as it may be

“What’s the excuse

“Says she’s not going
I saw the dress she wore
vulgar thing it is, not
mine.”

“I told you how it

“You’re always saying
able.”

“Ha,” thought G

was always the most envious little wretch—but it won't do; I shall go to Court whether she likes it or not. I'm not the person to be kept under by a chit like that, six years younger than myself."

"Mrs. D'Esterre has the advantage of you, there, Bell. And," (he added internally), "not there only."

"It isn't pleasant to be presented by a stranger. Pray Mr. P—— have none of *your* family ever been at Court?"

"Not that I know of."


"Then I must have recourse to Lady Fligh."

"Before you ask a second time, Bell, you had better make sure that you will be received at the drawing-room."

"What's to prevent me?"

"People in business don't usually go to Court at all."

"Who's to know that we're in business? You don't suppose the Queen will be ill-bred enough to say, 'Who are you, ma'am—and



“No, certainly ;
customary for all
the drawing-room,
days previously. For-
ward, if, after buying
all the necessary articles
you were to be to
dispensed with.”

“This comes of
Bell, sulkily. For
to risk so great a
project must be aban-

“So, Georgy, ha-
matter of your to-
said D’Esterre to h-

“No—or rather,
for I have given up

"I wish, Georgy, you could give me a little of your prudence," observed Perceval, with an air of much satisfaction. He had not forgotten the dispute about the shawl; and Georgina, blushing for her insincerity, yet lacking courage to be candid, hastily turned the subject.

That evening, while sitting in the inner drawing-room, she overheard her husband say to Lady Gertrude—

"You see, I was right when I told you Georgina's prudence would be worth more than a fortune; she gives up going to Court from economical motives."

"I wish Mrs. D'Esterre had taken this prudent fit a little earlier; on our first arrival in town, for instance, when, in defiance of my advice and judgment, she chose to throw away such sums of money on her dress."

"I don't blame her for it—on the contrary, I am convinced that, in dressing becomingly and according to her station in society, Georgina only sought to please me; and I believe it is


the same desire which now induces her to practise self-denial."

Lady Gertrude answered with one of her peculiar sneering laughs — while Georgina pressed her hand upon her forehead. More than once did she resolve to undeceive Perceval; but the spirit of the world was stealing fast upon her; and shame, false shame, triumphed over better, wiser feeling. She was besides becoming daily more painfully aware of the slight hold she possessed over D'Esterre's affection, and she dared not risk its diminution.

There is, perhaps, no more serious drawback to a character than a deficiency of moral courage. I do, really, believe that quite as many foolish actions, and perhaps wrong ones, have their origin in cowardice as in actual want of principle.

CHAPTER V.

THE season wore to its conclusion—London began to thin; and Lady Gertrude D'Esterre, in anticipation of her, now, immediate journey into Scotland, was gone to make purchases—to buy bargains at one of those ready money houses situated in almost unknown parts of the town, where provident house-wives, with a degree of patience they might, with advantage, display on many other occasions, spend whole mornings providing themselves with pins by the pound, ribbon by the piece, and buttons by the gross; because, by so




of business as to in
some degree of order
gina availed herself
to her father; and
found it—she could
openness; she knew
not approve of the
that, alas! had lately
of her life. She was a
that her omitting to
had deeply wounded
The improvement in
might not be traced to
sistance she had given
speaking, of no avail
ducing Belinda into
had desired, she had

Mrs. Gustavus Pratt was in existence—and more than once, in driving out, when a bright blue carriage had passed hers, Georgina, in place of bowing to the gaily attired occupant of the flashy vehicle, had turned her head quickly away;—of course, her visit remained unnoticed.

In every respect, therefore, Georgina felt she had disappointed her relatives; and, to an affectionate disposition, there is, perhaps, no impression more painful than the conviction that we have not answered the wishes, or fulfilled the hopes of those we love.

It was a wearisome task, that letter to her—and the paper still presented so much dazzling white—so few lines of small and delicate tracing, that it was needless to think of a concluding paragraph—when a carriage drove up to the door.

“I am sorry I denied myself,” said Georgina, then, catching at any interruption to her present irksome occupation—any excuse for an



He did not greet her with affectionate cordiality; on the contrary, there was restraint in his manner, voice, and cold politeness in all unlike the Maurice of old. On her side, became embarrassed, languid was the conversation, inquiries for mutual friends, weather, the public news &c. all were touched upon in rapid succession and as speedily relinquished.

“And you have been a town?” observed Georgina, with an air of reproach.

“I could not have called it a town,” she replied. “indeed, even to-day, I am impatient for the power of waiting”

perceive, within visiting reach for *fashionable* people, though she finds no difficulty in calling where she wishes."

Georgina coloured, it was six weeks since Belinda's visit. "I ought to have called at Willow Villa long ago; and I have often wished it—but—but—"

"You have no carriage?"

"I have not, always, the command of one. Lady Gertrude D'Esterre drives out daily, and usually directs our course. But," continued Georgina, with a winning smile, "my mother-in-law leaves us in a day or two, and then, I will make amends for my remissness."

"Pray do not put yourself to so much inconvenience; Belinda will soon, herself, be leaving town, and, on no account would she have Mrs. D'Esterre do violence to her refined notions, by driving in so plebeian a direction."

Once more Georgina's speaking colour varied, but, this time, she blushed from resentment, not shame; and when, a few minutes after—

and she thought of
the men with whom
of associating ; so
in his manner. He
so unfashionable,
Maurice was very
for the worse, per-
with that vulgar M
nothing but pettish

Maurice was not
he had become more
for the increase of
of languor to his
nearer akin to elegan

Maurice's medita-
Willow Villa, were
Georgina than her
believed her to be th

and her drawing-room littered with expensive toys—her dress of the most costly description; and he knew that, with one exception, she had answered each appeal from her family with parsimonious meanness, or silent refusal: and concluded that cold-hearted egotism had usurped the place of better, truer feelings; that already, had the world done its accustomed work, and transformed the warm and loving heart into a shrine where self, and self-alone, might reign.


The next day, to the infinite relief of both son and daughter, Lady Gertrude D'Esterre took her departure; and on the following, Georgina, now, for the first time, really mistress of her movements, ordered her carriage to Willow Villa. In passing through one of the most crowded thoroughfares, her progress was impeded by one of those assemblings of motley personages so frequent in the streets of London. For, we all know that, although John Bull is one of the busiest fellows in the world, and

feather, a dancing
there is John, gaz
when, at length, t
is able to recal his
covers that his po
accident John Bu
in the fervour of
some one of the
sparring match, t
delights in, where
of recovering his p
is a fine fellow, ev
no one more than
windows of a nei
John on, and slake

The crowd, that

sing's progress

beyond the strength of the wretched animal ; but which, nevertheless, was goaded and beaten by its brutal owner, until its miseries were terminated by another victim of that ferocious spirit so degrading to, and so universal amongst, the lower orders of English—an over-driven, infuriated bullock, which, in place of entering a slaughter-house, made a rush at the unfortunate dog and sent both it, and its burden, flying through the air. They alighted on a basket of crockery, which an itinerant vender, who happened to be passing, carried on his head—man and basket were quickly precipitated to the ground, and the crash of the broken china, the angry exclamations of the owners of the strangled dog and smashed earthenware, the screams of women and children, roars of the maddened animal, as, followed by butchers' boys and drovers, he pursued his destructive career, formed a clamour and excitement that speedily attracted a crowd so dense as to impede all free passage ; and, notwithstanding



in front, and a dus

While thus p
ample time to ob
those master passi
the countenances c
but her attention
object only—Mau
detained ; and, in
his way, as other
he stood leaning ag
too much exhau
exertion ; and, as
than once passed
pallid brow—Geor
altered—how the
temples sunk ; sh

of elegance that had so offended her fastidious taste. The next moment a spruce footman informed Mr. Arnold that Mrs. D'Esterre wished to speak with him. In a few seconds he was at the carriage-door.

“My dear Maurice, are you going home?”

“I am on my way to Belinda's.”

“Will you let me set you down?—I am sure you are quite unequal to walking through these dreadful streets—pray come with me; you must, indeed.”

He hesitated: but, as he could not deny he was on his way home, and Georgina's—“I will not be refused, you must—you shall,” was the most winning supplication woman ever uttered, or man listened to, after a very short debate between prudence and inclination, Maurice accepted the vacant seat.—

Men laugh at women for their loquacity, and I must say, I think them very ungrateful, seeing how often our powers of conversation are put forth for their especial amusement. Impolitic

perhaps, pheasant
What, I say, would
if all the young l
many canary bird
other in strength c
chosen by these lo
deep nor varied ;
be beyond their l
to suit your cor
to entertain is
gradient in the s
would become o
obliged to receive
mind is weighed
fulness—perhaps
are intractable as

who, to morrow, leads in a case that may make or mar his name for life—or the merchant, trembling for his credit;—how would each and all of these manage, if their ladies could not, did not talk? And how would Maurice Arnold have concealed the emotion Georgina's affectionate address called up, if she had not taken the lead in their discourse? Badly enough, I fear; for it was not the fashionable woman, but the pure the unsophisticated Georgy of other days.

Willow Villa was a small, neat, bandbox looking house, standing in the midst of ground tastefully laid out in gravel walks, enlivened by fancy flower-beds, shaped like hearts, and half-moons. Whence the derivation of its name no one could divine—for nothing like a Willow might be discovered, amidst the dusty lilacs and laburnums that were supposed to secure the privacy of house, and grounds, and garden—but Willow Villa was carved in stone on the exterior of the building—and Willow Villa was painted in black letters on one side of the

tor ; “ I know my

The man obeyed
Maurice, entered
the room dignified
drawing-room, a
three French window
of Belinda’s station
their drawing-room
the furniture of course
other earthly purposes
brown Holland ;
used.

“ Strange, outside
Mrs. D’Esterre’s father
up on the coach-box
acquaintances live

“ Queer, indeed

gate, according to the established rule, and sometimes very inconvenient habit of London coachmen. "What 's she come here for, and who 's the chap we took up in Oxford-street?"

"Believe his name 's Arnold, but can't say, indeed."

"Hope she won't keep us long, any how."

"Mrs. D'Esterre doesn't often detain us."

"Don't know that—remember yesterday—I'm sure I was nearly broiled to death."

"Very true; it was remarkably hot—I'm afraid my complexion was none the better for it: but it was Lady Gertrude's fault—its lucky the old woman 's gone; I don't think I should have staid, otherwise; what a temper she has; two mistresses at a time is really too much of a good thing."

"If I was a member of Parliament—"

"You a member of Parliament, John? He, he, he."

"Aye, you may laugh, William; but the time will come, and may be sooner than you

and no qualificatio

“ I don’t want t
conservative ; don
just think, my dea
revolution, and the
what would becom

“ What would be
be at the top, to
take snuff, have di
should go to the to

“ I don’t feel so

“ But I do : arn
the bottom, now ?
son, if all was turn
now will be heads l

“ I don’t wish fo

“ At all events :

gentlemen like us (let alone the hosses), are to stay for hours kicking our heels, and broiling in the sun, because Mrs. D'Esterre chooses it."

"Certainly," replied the dandy footman, taking a pinch of Prince's mixture. "Certainly, I don't deny the inconvenience."

"There 's neither sense nor justice in it," cried the coachman, waxing warm.

"I must confess the many are martyrs to the few,"* replied William; taking, at the same time from his pocket, a number of the — papers.

"Do you like that?" enquired his companion.

"Why, yes—no, not altogether; he 's a clever man, though; but too low and vulgar to suit my taste; don't think there 's much nature in his characters."

"Well, now, I likes him hugely; and, as for nature, why, to my mind, it 's all as natural as a whip."

* Fact. A livery servant was heard to make this observation.

Mrs. GUSTAVUS I
making her appear
stiff arrangement of
newness, told plain
The interesting Be
had been luxuriating
lotes. She had no
six weeks ; she had
a thousand times more
and so in truth at

the interview, nothing beyond a monosyllable was suffered to escape her lips.

But curiosity, and an eager thirst for news, gradually triumphed over her resentment. In fact, Belinda's time passed heavily enough; beyond her husband's family she had scarcely an acquaintance; and as, since her espousals with a fishmonger, her favourite studies were discarded (for she found small amusement in reading the history of heroines, the finale of whose adventures so entirely differed from her own), Mrs. Pratt's diversions were very much limited to driving in her blue and red chariot; and even this was dull enough to a person who never, by any chance, met a familiar countenance, or enjoyed the satisfaction of returning a bow from an acquaintance.

In spite, therefore, of her cold reception, she was, really, glad to see Georgina. Gradually the ice thawed, and a flood of questions and remarks issued forth.

"Pray, Georgina," asked Maurice, after

ties, and prevailing
you go to church,

“La, Maurice,
joined Belinda.

“What is there

“I see a great
with any thing w

“Not much,
nothing extraor
You have asked
about her am
dress, and so on
enquire respecti
tion, so far
interest?”

“There is a ti

ing how the world goes on, you will come and spoil all by your gloomy fancies ; but it 's just like you, never thinking or caring for any one but yourself ; and, latterly, you have grown worse than ever ; I'm sure, I would not be of your way of thinking for the world."

" Perhaps, if you were, Belinda, you would complain less of the retired life you lead."

" Oh, as for that," replied his sister, " religious people require quite as much amusement as we do."

" Indeed?"

" Yes ; they are never happy without excitement of some kind or other ; what are all their meetings but religious dissipation, and party spirit?"

" Sometimes, I fear, your censure is correct."

" Even their church-going deserves no better name ; it is always to hear some particular preacher, not to worship God. And then they come home, and, in place of applying the sermon to their own hearts, amuse themselves

views and opinions
they force themselves
had a visit the
ladies, quite girls
to an association
lower orders, I
I never trouble
but I had, really
I said I took the
tion, and, would
was absolutely in
never have got rid
too, just as we
fusion of our firm
secuted by two
perance Society

* The Author hopes

able persons I ever met with. Then there is Mr. Trueman, who preaches what he takes good care not to practise—would you have me resemble any of these?”

“No, my dear Belinda,” replied Maurice, “I would not, indeed. But I would have you separate the chaff from the wheat; *really* pious people are not forward and impertinent, however zealous for the cause they wish to advocate, neither are there many Mr. Trueman in the ministry; but, even if there were, the misconduct or mistakes of its professors cannot injure religion itself, nor, in any measure, emancipate us from the solemn discharge of duties, of whose observance, or non-observ-

crimination, and ill-bred perseverance (though, perhaps, useful in adding to the funds of the society) prove injurious to real Christianity, by exciting prejudice and ill-will, sometimes amounting even to disgust. Zeal is good, and, to be zealously affected in a righteous cause; but to be useful, zeal must be tempered by gentleness. Never should those who seek to benefit their fellow-creatures forget, that courtesy and forbearance are at once our duty and our wisdom. People will not be scolded out of their opinions; we are to win, not drive, souls.

— Maurice, you

“I wish it were
your thoughts, Be
you are one of th
all serious subjects

“As for that,”
all very well for
about death, and
and mine—” (Be
Georgina’s senior.

“Even at Geor
are neither unbecc
are neither of y
death too often
wearied, to fasten
the beautiful.”

“Then, I am su

rice sighed, as he walked to the other end of the room.


“Why do you tease him so?” asked Georgina.

“Because he bores me to death with his absurd fancies.”

“They are more than fancies,” observed Georgina, sadly.

“Why,” said Belinda, with some surprise, “you look as solemn and ridiculous as he does. Are you also meditating a sermon? If so, pray spare me; I have had quite sufficient lecturing for one day. Besides, I always am, and always mean to be, a very refractory, unconvertible person; when I am old and ugly, as I suppose I must make up my mind to be, some forty or fifty years hence, I may perhaps turn ‘good;’ but for the present, ‘amusement’ is my motto, and this world, with all its vanities, my paradise.”

“Possibly, Belinda, if you knew more of the world, you would not call it by that name,” said Georgina.



delighted ; but, i
ferently now ; an
who devote them
serve a hard task-
the glare and gli
should see more
discontent than
have been amuse
of it passes away!

Maurice sudden
morocco volume
where, on accoun
accustomed to t
Georgina.

“ I am glad to
to find you can
and the gold, th

Georgy ;—and ever remember, that pleasures springing from a well-regulated mind, as they are the purest and the holiest, are also the most enduring.”

“ There is Mr. Pratt,” cried Belinda, delighted to interrupt her brother’s homily : “ there is my Gustavus returned, at least half an hour earlier than usual ; how lucky, now we shall be able to settle all about the day you are to dine here,” (then throwing up the window, she cried, not in the most dulcet tones), “ Mr. P—, Mr. P—, Gussy, don’t ride round, come in at once, I want you—how tiresome men are about horses ; he’s going round to the stable ; Maurice, pray stop him, if he once gets amongst the horses, we shan’t set eyes on him until dinner. Gussy, Mr. P—, I must ring the bell. Oh, he hears me, never mind, Maurice, he hears me. Gustavus, come in.”

“ I want to see the mare put up,” said Mr. Pratt.

"Yes, but come in at once, Georgina is here."

Mr. Pratt still exhibited symptoms of stable inclination, but a telegraphic look from his lady, accompanied by a slight frown, altered his mood; and, all dust and heat, he entered the drawing-room.

"Mrs. D'Esterre, my cousin Georgina," said Belinda.

"Glad to see you, Ma'am," replied Gustavus, looking at his boots, and heartily wishing he had been suffered to escape in peace. "Charming day—rather warm; don't ask for Mr. D'Esterre, for I have just had the pleasure of seeing him in St. James's-street."

"Indeed!" answered Georgina, in some surprise; not that her husband should be seen at that time in St. James's-street, but that he had been recognised by Mr. Pratt.

"Yes," continued the fishmonger, "he was coming out of one of the Club Houses as I passed—I was riding with young Tapwells, Bell, D'Esterre was with the Duke of D—."

“ Did you speak ?” enquired Georgina, fearful of an answer in the affirmative.

“ No,” replied Mr. Pratt, “ I did not ; merely bowed, which I was quite sorry for afterwards. I don’t think Mr. D’Esterre quite recollected me—I knew him, from seeing you set off together on a certain day. And that reminds me, Bell, to ask whether you left my card in Grosvenor-street ?”

“ No,” said his lady ; “ between near relatives it was not necessary ; I told you that before. But this dinner party ; the day is the first thing to be thought of : are you engaged for Saturday next ?”

“ No,” replied Georgina, “ at least, I believe not.”

“ How fortunate ; I had no idea—on so short a notice.”

“ You forget,” interrupted her husband, “ that on Saturday we have a dinner party : besides my father, mother, and the girls, the Ropers, Hammers, and Flighs, dine with us—

sixteen or seventeen; and the table only holds twelve with any degree of comfort."

"We were thirteen the other day, and every one declared there was plenty of room."

"Excepting Mrs. Leaf, who fainted from the heat; and Alderman Whimsy, who received a plate of scalding soup upon his head, in consequence of the servant's getting wedged between him and the wall."

"Oh, that was John's stupidity! And as for Mrs. Leaf, she thinks fainting interesting, and makes a point of swooning whenever she has the slightest excuse; and if your sisters will stay at home (I am sure they will, dear, good-natured creatures, always ready to oblige), we shall do delightfully; so, pray, Georgina, let us consider it a settled thing."

"I must consult Perceval, he may have engagements for that day, of which I am not, at present, aware," replied Georgina, rising to take leave.

"You're fashionable, I see; don't know D'Es-

terre's engagements, that's as it should be; husband goes his way, wife her's—then you can't quarrel—only way to prevent it, as I often say to Bell. Musn't give D'Esterre too much rein, though; gay, dashing spark—give you a fright, some day or other, if you don't look sharp. I often see him riding by the side of a very snart carriage, monstrous fine woman inside, and so *he* seemed to think, and I dare say the lady doesn't object to his society. Good looking, well made man, remarkably handsome leg, that's the thing to please the girls." (Throwing himself back, and extending his own clumsy, dusty, badly booted limb.)

"Really, Mr. P—," observed Belinda, pettishly, "your boots are not in drawing-room trim: do look what a mess the carpet is in."

"It's your own fault, Belinda; you should not have called me in, in such a hurry."

"Good bye," said Georgina.

"Don't forget Saturday. I consider it an engagement; and remember, it is a party; full-

dress, short sleeves, ornaments, and all that sort of thing."

"I will let you know whether we shall be able to come."

"Pray, what can prevent you?"

"If there should be an engagement."

"I will not hear of one."

Georgina kissed her hand, and the carriage drove off.

"What, in the name of wonder, could induce you, Belinda," enquired Mr. Pratt, as he and his lady walked side by side towards the house, "what, in the name of wonder, induced you to make a point of those people dining here on Saturday?"

"What? Why because other people are to be with us on that day; and I see no occasion for giving two dinners, if one will answer; besides, Lady Fligh seems inclined to give herself airs, and I wish her to see I have some fashionable acquaintances."

"And suppose Mr. D'Esterre should give

himself airs?" rejoined Mr. Pratt, recollecting the stiff stare of surprise his salutation elicited from Perceval.

"He? Oh, D'Esterre is the most good tempered, well-bred creature in the world."

"He doesn't, for all his good temper, look like a man who would particularly relish the society of *our* friends—and, as to his good breeding, I don't know how it is, but people (fashionable people especially) are apt to use their good breeding like a glove, and put it on and throw it off as may chance to be their humour. However, I suppose we must make the best of it; but Jane and Mary Anne will be disappointed, though, and most likely my mother will take offence, and the old lady's fine and crusty, I can tell you, when she happens to be put out."

"We can take the girls to Vauxhall," observed Belinda, looking as though she thought it of very little importance whether the young ladies were disappointed, and their mama's placidity disturbed, or not.

"And, by the way, what were you doing in St. James's-street?"

"Business, business. We are thinking of making a change, shifting our concern, or perhaps opening another house at the west end; and I went to look at some premises in Pall Mall, and took a couple of turns in St. James's-street with the rest of the beau monde—thought I might have seen you."

"You forgot that one of the carriage horses is sick, or said to be so."

"By Jove, so I did."

Mr. Pratt, who had married principally for connexion, walked towards the stable, very uncertain as to the wisdom of his choice. "Susan Knowles, the daughter of my father's partner, would have done better, perhaps, after all. At any rate, she would not have set my mother at defiance, or slighted Jane and Mary Anne," thought he.

Mr. Pratt had made quite as injudicious a choice as Perceval D'Esterre—in fact, more so;

for Belinda was unamiable. And, married to a woman of uncongenial tastes and habits—Mr. Pratt, the man of fish, will, in all probability, make as indifferent a husband as Mr. D’Esterre, the man of fashion. It is true, that, for the present, Perceval knows he may take liberties with his gentle Georgina—and he does it, as most men would; while Belinda’s imperious temper, together with the dread of ridicule from his old associates, should anything of a rupture take place with his “fine lady wife,” rendered her lord tolerably submissive and resigned. But this will not last: to allow of a woman’s holding and keeping the reins, there must be either great superiority of mind on her side, or excessive indolence on the part of her husband—in this instance, it was entirely the reverse; Belinda, being, as our readers are aware, a silly, indolent person; her partner a shrewd, bustling, and active man.

“She is not happy—Georgina is not happy;” thought Maurice, while watching the disap-

pearance of the carriage. "No—there is anxiety in the countenance, and languor in the voice. Then, how the colour faded at that indelicate insinuation of my vulgar brother-in-law. Poor, poor Georgina! You, too, then, know the bitterness of unrequited affection; and splendid as your lot may outwardly appear—you are not happy!" Then, as he slowly paced the little garden, Maurice thought of the more humble home he had once hoped to see graced by Georgina's presence—until, suddenly remembering the more than folly of such reflections, with a strong effort he drove the subject from his mind, and, following Mr. Pratt's footsteps, endeavoured to feel interested in the carriage horse's ailments.

The reluctance Georgina felt to impart to Perceval, the fact of Belinda's marriage and residence in town was very materially increased by the specimen she had just seen of Mr. Pratt's manner and conversation: but it was impossible any longer to delay making the disagreeable

communication, and she drove home revolving in her mind the best and easiest mode of broaching the subject, which she now heartily wished had been done long ago—by procrastinating, she had considerably increased the difficulty; her anxiety was however, for the present unnecessary.

CHAPTER VII.

WHEN Mrs. D'Esterre reached Grosvenor-street, a post-chaise and four was standing in front of the house. Servants were hurrying backwards and forwards—packages were strewed about the hall—in a word, there was every token of a speedy and sudden departure.

“Mr. D'Esterre is in the dining-room.” said the servant, throwing open the door of that apartment.

Georgina entered, and found her husband making a rapid meal, while, at one of the windows stood a business-looking man in a

brown surtout, who, it would appear, had already dined, and was engaged in looking over letters and making occasional notes of their contents.

"Glad you're come in, Georgina;" said Perceval, putting down his knife and fork. "I was afraid I should have started without seeing you, or saying good bye."

"Where are you going—and what can possibly have happened?" replied Georgina, looking startled and pale at the suddenness of the movement.

"Nothing amiss, dear; but I am going out of town—to Ringland, or rather to Lord Cotswold's, and I hope to come back member for S——."

"No doubt of it," observed the man in the brown coat. "Not the slightest doubt."

"Are you then going to stand for S——?"

"Yes; our late member accepted the Chiltern hundreds last night—ratted—the ministers want a vote, and think they will take us by surprise;

but Lord Cotswold means to disappoint them, and has called on me to come forward ; some of our friends of whom Mr. Blowell—(Mr. Blowell,—Mrs. D'Esterre—I forgot you were not acquainted) is one, have expressed a wish to the same effect—I am to be brought in free of expense : so I am off for Hartingfield."

"Immediately?" asked Georgina.

"Yes ; dispatch is our policy, and will I hope be our success."

"No doubt of it—no doubt of it," said Mr. Blowell.

"Yes," observed Perceval, "with the Cotswold interest, I hope we shall do. Lady Alicia Stuart's canvassing will do something ; she 's just the woman to make a man think black is white, to manage a refractory voter, or fix a waverer."

"How very strange in Mr. L. to change his politics," remarked Georgina, rather tartly.

"His second son, who was blackballed at his club and dismissed his regiment, has lately

taken orders ; and, it is said, the first Crown living worth having that falls in, will be given to him."

"How shocking!" rejoined Georgina, indignantly.

"If I get into the house for nothing in consequence, you must not quarrel with Mr. L—s want of consistency."

"Are you very anxious to be in Parliament?"

"It has long been my wish."

"And can I do nothing to assist, or further it? Do let me go with you—I could, at least, make up and give away the bows of ribbon."

"Nay, my dear girl, it is out of the question—where could we put you?—But you can do something to help on my cause—and that is, by appearing much in public, and speaking of my return as certain—beyond doubt."

"Good, very good;" said Mr. Blowell, "this is a world where to assume a merit will often obtain you full credit for possessing it: and it is the same with regard to success;

many a battle has been won rather by the stout heart than the strong arm. The mere semblance of confidence often secures the victory. To appear certain of success is one great step towards ensuring it."

"You have hit my meaning exactly ;" replied Perceval ; who had, however, another reason for his injunction. His creditors were becoming vexatiously importunate, and he hoped by the *éclat* of a successful election, to dazzle these disagreeable persons into a more forbearing mood. There was not much wisdom in the notion—but Mr. D'Esterre had never shewn himself very sapient in the management of his affairs.

"And you will be at Hartingfield all the time ?" enquired the anxious wife.

"No, not all the time."

"Shall I write to you there ?"

"I must go over to Ringland for a day or two.—But you had better send your letters under cover to the Marquis."


"I did not know Lady Alicia Stuart had left town."

"She goes down on purpose for this election," said Perceval, rising, "and now, Mr. Blowell, I am at your service." Mr. Blowell bowed awkwardly to Georgina, and walked away.

Perceval bid her take care of herself—go wherever she was asked, promised to write her an account of his proceedings, and sprung into the carriage, thinking certainly far more of his seat in Parliament than of his wife—but this was only natural, the one *was* his, the other—an uncertainty.

"He might have suffered me to join him," thought Georgina; and she spent that evening in a state of fitful uneasiness, wishing most sincerely, there were no such things as members of Parliament, or persons as Lady Alicia Stuart!

How unlike the joyous, buoyant-hearted girl of the preceding year! And the world had



Georgina's first
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Georgina drove
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blood-horses ar

"Dear, Georgina, is it you so early?" she said sharply, "I did not expect you for at least an hour."

"I wished, if possible, to be the first—it is so awkward to enter a room full of strangers, alone."

"I should have thought you had got rid of all that girlish nonsense, long ago," muttered Belinda.

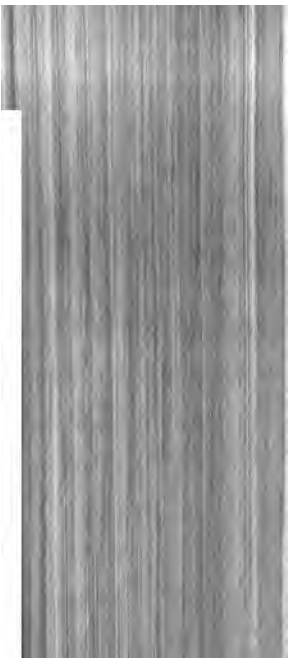
"I have heard my father say, shyness is rarely entirely overcome: it sometimes takes one form, sometimes another, but seldom vanishes altogether."

Belinda was silent; and Georgina enquired for Mr. Pratt.

"Mr. P— will be here when he has finished his toilet: it's quite astonishing what coxcombs men are," replied his wife; though she well knew Mr. Pratt's toilet had been finished long ago, and that he was busy decanting wine.

"But, Georgina, is that dress the fashion?"

"I believe so. How is Maurice?"



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room is full and we are all talking, it will not be heard. I hope so, at all events, for there is something so very vulgar in a loud cough ; it always puts me in mind of the poor people during sermon-time in church ; and Lady Fligh's nerves are particularly irritable. I do hope Maurice will not shock her. But, the best of it is that although he makes such an uproar himself, he is always complaining of other people ; and if Gustavus does but slam a door, or I laugh a little louder than usual, looks as if he were undergoing some excruciating torment. I shall be quite glad when he is gone."

"Does Maurice stay much longer with you?"

"No, he goes into Devonshire next week. There — there he goes again ; Georgina, do speak loud, it is so very annoying, and worries me beyond description."

"I fear we are more likely to annoy him ; the sound of voices is so teasing to an invalid. It is almost a pity, as he leaves you soon, you did not put off your party."

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“ Belinda, I
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Belinda felt
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“ How late
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how very late
have finished

exertions, replied by a very savage look ; then, planting himself in front of Georgina, began enquiring respecting Mr. D'Esterre's chance of success ; and, in a would-be witty manner poured forth a variety of jokes, hints, and cautions, respecting Lady Alicia Stuart ; whom, by some means, he had ascertained to have been the attractive fair one by whose carriage window D'Esterre had ridden.

"You must take care of her, you must, indeed, Georgy," said the vulgar being, who thought impudence was ease — familiarity a token of good breeding. "A monstrous fine creature ! D'Esterre, we know, has always had an eye for a fine woman," with a bow.

"What *can* that be?" cried Belinda, as a most portentous crash of crockery-ware was heard. "What *can* have happened ? Mr. P— do see, do enquire."

But Mr. P— was immoveable ; and, as Belinda, unable to master her anxiety, was flying towards the scene of the disaster, she

Benjamin and Lucy :

Two stout, round
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followed: and Belind
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Grosvenor-street, of
trude D'Esterre, L
Cotswold; all of wh
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that day at Willow Villa, might be made duly sensible that they were associating with the wife of an incipient member of Parliament, who lived in Grosvenor-street, and was closely allied to Lords and Ladies. To even such mean and paltry shifts as these will a worldly spirit have recourse.

More than once during the evening, Georgina's voice suddenly dropped, for, amidst the noise and clatter that surrounded her, her ear distinctly caught the painful hollow cough that had so startled her before; and when, in passing to her carriage, her eye rested on the only upper room which held a light, she sighed to think who it was, in sickness and in suffering, that occupied the inconvenient chamber.

But she erred in pitying Maurice; he was no object of compassion; despite all outward trial, he was cheerful, even happy; his hope was surely fixed—his anchor cast within the veil; and the peace of God, that peace which passeth understanding, reigned in his soul and

his early love,
and whose well
that to come,
the balance—
guarded, and

CHAPTER VIII.

ON the following day came Perceval's first letter to his wife; it was short, and unsatisfactory. "He had been," he said, "greatly misled as to the probable success of his election, which now was hardly even doubtful; in fact, he did not know whether he should not at once give up the contest. The expenses, also, were likely to be greater than he expected; and, to crown all, some difficulties, in which it appeared the bank at S—— had involved itself, were likely to affect him materially." As, however, this latter circumstance was merely hinted

at, Georgina, with all the blinding folly of a jealous mind, attributed the dejection of spirits under which Perceval wrote to disappointment at his failure, which disappointment, she imagined, would not have been half so keen, had not Lady Alicia Stuart shewn herself a most anxious and earnest partizan.

Her reply, the first letter, also, she had written since their separation, was cold and laconic; she made no mention of the preceding evening, it would be so much easier to *tell* Perceval when they met; and her expressions of condolence at his threatened defeat were few and languid—for was not Lady Alicia Stuart at hand? Lady Alicia, one word from whose lips would do more in consoling Perceval than volumes from Georgina's pen.

"Will you chaperone me to D— House, this evening?" wrote Janet to her sister. "Lady Kingsbury professes indisposition, and wishes to be quiet. Marcus proffers his services as our escort."

Georgina could not refuse — Perceval had desired her to appear in public. Neither sister found much pleasure in the gay and brilliant entertainment. In truth, could we but analyse the hearts of those who throng the crowded rooms of fashionable life, we should find little pleasure, less happiness—vanity, ambition, love of shew—these are the appetites that feed their cravings in the haunts of dissipation.

Janet was, if possible, less interested than Georgina. Always self-confident and vain, she had flattered herself that the anxiety, so unlike the usual politeness of first cousins, Sir Marcus had evinced to be their escort might be, in some measure at least, attributed to the power of her attractions: but, as if aware of what was passing in Miss Irving's mind, the wary young Baronet took good care effectually to dispel such a pleasing illusion. Far from asking Janet's hand for waltz, quadrille, or gallopade, or betraying the slightest wish for monopolising the fair schemer, he contrived to seat his two charges

"How odd in nature
when we know so few

"Know so few people
in surprise; "I think
must be here; at least
but bow and answer
miserable election and
think people are very
know there is no class
and yet every body
there is Lady G——

"Oh, yes," said
women, "I was not
ball-room, female friends
worse than useless
near-sighted, and as

"Well; but then
that you know, that
Janet could not

many cavaliers hovering near, but her bow and smile had merely elicited a formal inclination of the head from these flinty, fastidious persons ; she was not the magnet that attracted to and kept them in that particular spot : they lingered watching Georgina, and evidently shewing that it needed but a little, a very little encouragement, a glance, a word, to call forth the *devoument* Janet so eagerly desired.

“How coquettish Georgina is!” thought Janet ; “she knows Sir Studholme Barron is dying to come and talk to her, and she will not even look towards him. And Lord St. Arvan’s, how coldly she returned his bow ; but it is all artifice ; by apparent indifference, she, in reality, creates a deeper interest : besides, whilst I am here, people might fancy I was the object of admiration—all artifice and coquetry, as we shall see ; when I go off to dance, all this reserve will disappear, or I am very much mistaken.”

But there seemed little prospect of verifying

and, when, at length
Miss Irving, and in
hand, she had the said
Sir Marcus Kingsland
himself of the vacation
make amends for previously
absolutely devoted to

“How lovely Mrs.
said Janet’s partner
improves her; if to
her of her roses, it is
flower, and to all
beauty.”

Janet listened to
with impatience.
her roses, she was
seeing no prospect
mainder of the evening
mistake all looks to

"The heat overcomes you, dearest Georgina ; let us go home."

"Oh, but I do not like to take you away."

"Nay, nay, how can I enjoy myself, whilst I see you suffer? Marcus, pray enquire for the carriage."

"But have you no engagements?"

"None of the slightest consequence," replied Janet, who had not even one.

"The carriage is ready," said Sir Marcus—and in a few minutes they were on their way home. Janet, inveighing against the stupidity of the party, as young ladies who fail of getting partners generally do ; and Georgina, sad and silent.

Sir Marcus professed his intention of buying a town house, when he met with one precisely to his fancy ; and, in the mean time, he talked of chambers in the Albany, but continued living with his mother ; for Sir Marcus, although rich, was a prudent young man, and preferred the slight restraint imposed by a residence

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"By the bye, I'm
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"Yes," he replied
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Lady Alicia Stuart
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"Really, Marcu
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"Not altogether groundless, I fear," observed Janet.

"Yes," said Lady Kingsbury, who, considering the match one of her own making, chose to believe Mr. D'Esterre everything he ought to have been, "I say it *is* groundless—without even the shadow of a foundation. Perceval cares not one jot for Lady Alicia Stuart: he is an exemplary husband—quite a pattern for young men; and Georgina one of the happiest of wives, as, indeed, she deserves to be, sweet girl. I only wish, Janet, you were likely to make half so good a marriage as your sister has done."

"I trust that, if I ever do marry, I shall not be united to so volatile, extravagant a man as Mr. D'Esterre," replied Janet, anxious to impress Sir Marcus with the notion of her indifference towards Perceval, and, at the same time, to afford stability to a report, that must interfere with Georgina's present, and probably

injure her future happiness. For the wily being full well remembered Mr. D'Esterre's opinions respecting jealousy, and she felt that, were Georgina's temper once soured by that unhappy passion, another chance of her gaining his affection would be lost.

"Was Georgina looking well last night?" asked Lady Kingsbury.

"Wretchedly. My sister was quite out of spirits, and is, I fear, far from being in good health."

"Oh, it was all my doing: she was in high beauty—the finest woman in the room, until I made that confounded blunder."

"Then, Marcus, you had better call in Grosvenor-street this morning, and enquire for her. I am expecting Dr. W., who comes to see me by appointment, or I would go myself; but you can call, and pray contrive to counteract the mischief you have done."

"Can't, possibly—promised Wanstead to be with him at one o'clock precisely, and its half

past twelve now. I'm really sorry—'pon my word I am; there's nothing I like better than half an hour's flirting with my pretty cousin—but this morning it 's out of the question."

"*I* thought of spending the day with Georgina: that is to say, if you can spare me," said Janet, to Lady Kingsbury.

"Certainly, certainly."

"Well then, I will walk down with you; it 's all in my way," rejoined Sir Marcus. "Now don't be an hour getting ready, and be sure you tell Georgina it was all a mistake about Lady Alicia Stuart."

"Remember, Janet, it was all a mistake of mine; not a word of truth in it," again urged Sir Marcus, when they parted in Grosvenor street.

"Yes, yes," replied Miss Irving, entering the house.

"Have you heard from Perceval to day?" was her first question to her sister; whose swollen eyes and pallid countenance told of a sleepless, tearful night.

be going wrong. The
be contested."

"Indeed! Well, after
Everybody knew from
was a very hopeless but
Perceval's infatuation
a scheme."

"Perceval had strove
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Cotswold——"

"Lord Cotswold had
he merely wanted to b
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Georgina rather sharply, "that Perceval should not have seen through Lord Cotswold's mean and shallow policy?"

"There are some circumstances, under which the most clear-sighted become blind : we always readily believe what we chance to wish, or hope for ; and few people hesitate to follow suggestions which tally with their own inclinations ; although, in so doing, they neither act with wisdom nor propriety."

Georgina understood her sister's meaning, and an unconscious sigh told Janet that her well directed shaft had done its office.

"Is Perceval likely to return soon?" enquired Miss Irving.

"He appears quite uncertain ; it will, he says, entirely depend on some business of a very unpleasant nature."

"Where was he when he wrote?"

"At Ringland."

"Had he been there many days?"

"Oh no ; he left Hartingfield on the preceding day—Thursday."

said Georgina, now
mention her."

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"Janet," cried
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love me, tell me

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appeal, she th
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When

it, that those lips, ever so prone to flattery, so prompt to utter false and pleasing nothings, could not now express one word of truth or consolation?

Alas! the heart was seared with envy—accursed envy! and the lips, even in the moment of caressing, even whilst proffering the language of affectionate regard, were curled in triumph, in the rejoicing of a fiend-like spirit, over the suffering and humiliation that now crushed the object of its deadly hate!—Except to *pity*, Janet uttered not; and Georgina saw in her sister's silence all the confirmation of her misery.

Reader,—you recoil from this description, you turn, with loathing, from a portraiture, at once so dark and yet so highly coloured. Perchance, you say, the model, whence I took the hideous likeness, is not in human nature. Nay, rather pause—examine your own heart, and see whether, amidst its inmost folds, there lurk not traces of resemblance. Have you not, some-

times, felt uneasy when the praises of your neighbour formed the theme of conversation? Have you never murmured, never cherished thoughts of discontent, because some good, some benefit, from which you were debarred, has been awarded to another? Can you, indeed, rejoice with those that do rejoice, and mourn with those that mourn? Unless you can, boast not your freedom from foul envy's taint. You are not, and you never may become, what Janet Irving was; for, in her instance, many things combined to raise the passion to its highest pitch: but there are all degrees of vice, and that which is a pigmy now, may one day be a giant.

Then search your heart, and should there seem one spot—one little spot of envious hue, let it be quickly cleansed. Crush, crush the noisome reptile in its birth; give it nor time, nor space, to reach maturity.

CHAPTER IX.

THE carriage was announced ; Mrs. D'Esterre would gladly have remained at home ; she was, however, over-ruled by Janet.

“ We will take a quiet drive to some of the nursery gardens, the air will do you good.”

Georgina agreed ; and the silence of the drive was interrupted only by expressions of affection and condolence on the part of the deceitful Janet, so worded that a less excitable temper would have all but maddened. But Georgina only wept : acutely as she felt her husband's defalcation, she could not blame him : no, she

was the fault, her insignificance, her inferiority, and not his fickleness, had occasioned Perceval's inconstancy.

"Any further orders for the carriage?" enquired the butler, when they returned from their mournful excursion.

"When will you have the carriage, Janet?" asked Georgina.

"I shall not require it: Lady Kingsbury dines with her sister, and will call for me on her way home."

The coachman was informed that his further services for that evening were dispensed with, and, having made over steeds and carriage to the helper's management, he betook himself to the public-house it was his pleasure to patronise.

Shortly after, when about to commence her dinner toilet, Georgina was informed a gentleman was below and wished to speak with her.

"At this time of day?" exclaimed she.

"Price, I really can see no one, I am not well, do say so."

The next moment a slip of paper was conveyed to her.

"DEAREST GEORGINA,


"I must see you for five minutes.

"MAURICE ARNOLD."

"What can it be?" cried Georgina, as, greatly agitated, she flew down stairs. Janet followed, and Mrs. Price listened over the banisters.

Maurice made no excuse for his imperative intrusion. His errand was, alas! of a nature to require none. Major Berrington was ill, dangerously ill, given over by his medical adviser. Maurice, on the eve of setting off for Atherley, wished to break the melancholy tidings to Georgina, and learn how soon she might be expected. He had called twice during her absence from home.

Georgina, already nervous and dejected, was completely overcome by the afflicting intelli-



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supplicating gaze.
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Major Berrington
be mistaken ; still
he would lose no
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"When do you go, Maurice?" enquired Georgina without heeding Janet's remark.

"I travel by this evening's mail, which sets off in about an hour."

"I will accompany you."

"You, you?" exclaimed Janet, "you travel by the mail?"

"Yes," replied Georgina, "it is the quickest conveyance, and there is not a minute to be lost."

"I see no reason for your going at all."

"Janet," said Georgina, reproachfully, "my father is ill, dangerously ill—wishes for me. Would you have staid away from a parent at such a time?"

"I have never had a parent;" observed Janet, bitterly, and her vivid fancy rapidly flew back to that far distant period when her mother's injudicious preference for her youngest daughter first awakened envious feelings in the eldest. When she recalled her thoughts to present things and objects, Georgina's journey was arranged; so far, at least, that, although the other places in the mail were engaged, one of

the occupants, a friend of Maurice's, might, he thought, be induced to relinquish his seat in Georgina's favour. Accordingly, Maurice set off without loss of time, in pursuit of this gentleman, and, whilst he negotiated the affair, Mrs. D'Esterre endeavoured to direct the necessary preparations for her journey. She wrote, also, a few hurried, scarcely intelligible lines, to her husband.

"It must go by to-morrow's post," she said, as, with trembling hands, she sealed the letter; "and should Perceval arrive before he receives it, you will explain all to him, dearest Janet."

"Surely, I will; rely upon me, my sweet Georgy. How I wish I could be useful, could do anything for you; but, unluckily, there is nothing in my power: even if I were to go with you, much as I should like it, I fear you would find me only in the way. Tell your father, if he wishes for me, I will fly to Atherley—will you, my dear girl?"

Georgina grasped her sister's hand.

"What will you do for a servant? If there

•

be but one vacant seat, Price cannot accompany you."

"If she could, I would not take her. You know that, at Atherley, a fine lady, like Mrs. Price, would be nothing but an encumbrance."

"Then she will not follow you?"

"Certainly not."

"Dearest Georgina," said Janet, shortly after, in a tone of much affection; "dearest Georgina, tell me, when Perceval returns, shall I speak, shall I remonstrate with him on his unfortunate infatuation? It will be, I confess, a painful, a most painful task; still, where your happiness is at stake, I ought not, and I would not, consider my own feelings. Say then, if you wish me to speak to Perceval."

A very mournful negative was Georgina's reply; while her countenance sensibly expressed how painfully she felt this fresh allusion to the subject.

"You will not;" answered Janet, quickly: "you purpose, tamely, to submit to such

" I know not, as
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" You are the
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" If I did not

me? Oh no. Affection once lost is lost for ever. Therefore, though my heart may break, as I sometimes think it will, it shall break in silence."

"I marvel you are mean-spirited enough to love a man who openly neglects you. Were I in your place——"

"You would act differently—perhaps more wisely; you know, we are, we always were, unlike."

"Nay," answered Janet, drily—here a servant entered, and put into Mrs. D'Esterre's hand a note from Maurice.

He had succeeded in his negociation, and begged her to lose no time in proceeding to the mail's starting place, where he would meet her.

"The carriage, directly," cried Georgina. But the coachman had gone out, and, as no time could be lost, a hackney coach was ordered.

"What will you do, Janet?" Enquired Georgina; "but for the urgency of the case, I should be ashamed of my inhospitality."

"As I am not expected at home, I must be indebted to your housekeeper for my dinner, after that, I will walk to Bruton street."

"The carriage is at the door, Ma'am," said the butler, not a little surprised at the passing events.

"Farewell, dear Janet—that letter—you won't forget that letter to your master, Parsons: how foolish I am, I believe, after all, it might have gone by this day's post; but I really feel so bewildered I have not a single clear idea."

"Good bye, Georgy: remember, if I can be of any service you must send for me," said Janet, folding her sister in her arms.

Georgina took her seat; the dashing footman, also, took his, rather revolving in his mind the expediency of quitting a service where the Lady contaminated herself and her domestic, by making use of so vulgar a vehicle as a hackney coach.

Stationed at the drawing-room window, Janet watched her sister's departure, and, for a

moment, something like pity stole across her bosom ; but the next, her quick eye caught a glimpse of two miniatures which lay upon the table, amidst a host of fanciful, expensive baubles. One was D'Esterre's, and it wore that look, that soft, peculiar look, she had once seen directed to herself ; and, as she gazed upon the speaking portrait, former impressions, feelings, hopes came rushing over her. The other was a likeness of Georgina, taken to gratify her husband's vanity, and a successful, most successful, trial of the painter's skill. Janet threw it from her with an expression of disgust—then, taking up a book, tried to abstract her mind from all round her—but it might not be.—It was not in that work to arrest her troubled thoughts—to interest her high-wrought feelings—to banish the one baneful, hate-rousing reflection, that she had been supplanted by her sister ; and, after a short struggle with better principles, Janet gave up the contest. She walked across the room, and taking up

Georgina's letter to her husband, contemplated it for a few minutes, with a countenance in which a strange mixture of emotions was observable.

"Why not destroy it? I saw by Parsons' manner that he did not hear Georgina's order; he, therefore, will not miss it. Why should I not destroy it? If I know anything of Perceval, and, I think, I know him well—he will not be altogether pleased by this sudden flight; just at a time, too, when he is expected home; and his dissatisfaction will be materially increased if he can be made to think she has omitted writing. Even should they have an explanation, and nothing is more unlikely, for Perceval hates scenes, the letter will be concluded lost—misaid, through the servant's carelessness. No one will suspect me. Yes, yes, I will destroy it—I will take the risk."

Janet was on the point of tearing up the letter, when the servant entered to announce dinner. She hastily concealed it in her reticule

and proceeded to the dining room. The solitary meal was speedily dispatched; and as there was nothing particularly attractive in Georgina's house, and a chance that Sir Marcus Kingsbury, who dined at his club, might drop in at home, Miss Irving, shortly after, betook herself to that locality.

Her expectations were fulfilled; and by the time Lady Kingsbury returned from her sober dinner party, the tête à tête had been sufficiently long to convince the young Baronet that his cousin Georgina had been guilty of a very foolish, uncalled for compromise of her dignity in travelling by a public conveyance, without even the protection of her maid's presence.

Lady Kingsbury, herself, on hearing Janet's account of Major Berrington's very slight illness, was obliged to acknowledge the step precipitous.

"Georgina should, certainly, have awaited Perceval's return. But," continued the elderly lady, who seemed, latterly, to have conceived a

positive dislike to Miss Irving; "I must say, Janet, I think you are more to blame than your sister."

"I, Madam?"

"Yes, you. Why did you suffer her to leave town in so abrupt a manner? As the elder, and, in some respects, the more prudent, it was your duty to use your influence to prevent Georgina's acting hastily."

Janet made no answer; it was not her habit to reply to Lady Kingsbury, and, it is possible, the apparent contempt evinced by this behaviour tended more than anything to alienate that lady's regard. People, elderly people especially, will not easily forgive tokens of disrespect in those who owe them an obligation.

CHAPTER X.

LATE in the evening of the ensuing day, Mr. D'Esterre arrived in town. Perhaps, never in the course of his whole life had he thought so much, as during the journey from Ringland to London, and dark and cheerless were his meditations. Coupled with the mortification of defeat—with the painful conviction that he had again become the dupe of the Cotswold party, was the contemplation of his hopelessly embarrassed circumstances. The evil hour, he had, vainly, striven to avert, had come at last; long had ruin tracked him, now the chase was

over, and the game must yield. Poverty, privation, ignominious seclusion, must henceforth be his lot—he, who had loved splendour, glitter; who had existed but in the factitious glare of fashionable celebrity.

It was, in truth, an uninviting prospect—a prospect which his spirit loathed—his soul sickened at. One only ray gilded the dim horizon—one point alone there seemed, whence hope might rise, and in her flight scatter the beams of happiness around—Georgina. Acquaintances would shun, and friends desert—but she—his wife, she—whom he had chosen, had raised from her obscurity; who had shared his wealth and splendour, would she too change? Might he not claim her love, her sympathy and her devotedness? Oh, yes, he might. And she would answer the appeal—Georgina would be all to him. As Perceval thus reasoned, he gradually shook off the weighty, anxious feelings that had bowed him down; and his mind filled with sweet visions of domestic happiness—his

bosom glowed with emotions hitherto unknown or overlooked. He leaped from the carriage, and, darting up stairs, eagerly sought her presence.

The room was empty—evidently had not been occupied that day; and, in reply to his impatient questions, he ascertained that Mrs. D'Esterre had left town the preceding evening.

His amazement, and vexation, on hearing this unexpected announcement were excessive; and not at all decreased on learning the particulars of her departure, given, as accounts flowing through similar channels almost invariably are, with exaggeration and inaccuracy.

“Who accompanied Mrs. D'Esterre?” enquired Perceval.

“Mr. Arnold, Sir. Mr. Arnold, the gentleman who called so often.”

“Called so often?”

“Yes, Sir; at least, he called twice, if not three times in the course of the afternoon.”

“And was he in the habit of calling?”

"Can't say, indeed, sir—I believe not very often. Once, I know, he came and was admitted, although my mistress had given orders to be denied."

"Humph," said Perceval, feeling uncomfortably suspicious. "Was that during my absence?"

"No, sir, a few days before."

"Mrs. D'Esterre did not see this gentleman when I was absent?"

"No sir, at least, not here. But——"

"But what?"

"Why sir, I remember William saying that, once when they were driving out, Mrs. D'Esterre stopped the carriage, and took up the gentleman, and they went together to some house——"

"Whose house?" cried Perceval impatiently, "and where was it?"

"William did not say the name, sir; for the gentleman told him to let them out."

"Where is William?"

William came, and somewhat relieved his

master's agitated mind, by informing him "that the house belonged to a Mr. Pratt, that it was at Camberwell; and that Mrs. D'Esterre had dined there, he believed, to meet a party." On hearing these particulars, Perceval formed the natural and indeed true conclusion. Still it appeared strange—very strange, that Georgina should have made no allusion to her relations, or to the dinner party: there was, at least, concealment on her part, and concealment argues guilt. Perceval knew he had proved in some respects a careless, but he had not been an unkind, husband: why then this reserve, this want of confidence? Again, although her father's state might require the utmost dispatch in travelling, why decline the convenience and protection of her waiting woman? Her quitting town also, precisely when his return was hourly expected, without leaving even a verbal message to apprise him of her intention, bore the appearance of more than indifference to his feelings.

vainly endeavored—

truth. Mrs. Price felt herself being left behind, and the matter gave Georgina's appearance of a guilty flight.

"You are sure there is no sage?"

"Perfectly, sir," replied particularly when Miss

"Miss Irving was breathing more freely.

"Yes," she answered prevent Mrs. D'Esterre

Perceval took his hat home."

"If you please, stating, "if—if Mr. I

"But," urged the butler, "he's insolent sir, and threatens an execution; and, if something is not done to pacify him, I'm afraid—"

Mr. D'Esterre made a movement of impatience; and Parsons, muttering something about people getting their due, retired. Not so Mrs. Price, who had been admiring herself in one of the mirrors for the last five minutes, and, having placed her cap in its most becoming manner, now advanced, and informed her master "that she was exceedingly sorry to interrupt him just at that *pettiklar* moment, but that it was her intention to leave Mrs. D'Esterre's service, and wished, if quite convenient, to receive her wages."

"I really am much concerned, and would not, for the world, do any thing unhandsome by Mrs. D'Esterre, but my family and friends are all so very *pettiklar*; and they won't hear of my remaining with a lady who forgets herself so far as to—"

"Silence, woman," said Perceval, sternly.

"La, sir," exclaimed the damsel, looking as though preparing for a scene.

"Silence, I say; and leave the room, the house, I mean, this very hour."

"I'm sure I don't want to stay one moment, not I; but I'll thank you to pay me my wages."

"State your demand."

"Eighteen guineas for three quarters' wages; besides the trifle I have laid out for Mrs. D'Esterre, in ribbons and gloves."

"What does it all amount to?"

"I'm sure I can't tell all in a minute; but, if you please, sir, I can make out a bill."

"You can give a round guess, I suppose."

"I don't think forty pounds would more than cover the whole."

Perceval wrote a draft for the amount (totally forgetting, in the excitement of the moment, that he had already overdrawn his banker's account), and throwing it to her, again commanded her to leave the house.

"I shall go this moment," said she, flourish-

ing out of the room ; “ though I must say, I think it rather hard one ’s to be so used, just for saying I don’t choose patronising a lady who travels in a stage coach.” And she proceeded immediately to pack up her clothes, including therewith sundry articles of dress, and ornaments, which, in the confusion, she felt would not be missed.

Perceval, meanwhile, ordered some wine-and-water, then hurried to Bruton-street. Janet was alone at home. Lady Kingsbury spent that evening at a quiet party, and Sir Marcus followed his own devices in another direction. From Miss Irving, as may be supposed, Mr. D’Esterre gained little comfort. She affected almost ignorance of the Pratts’ residence in town ; made light of Major Berrington’s illness ; and, altogether, strongly impressed D’Esterre’s mind with the conviction that, in this strange and unnecessary absence from home, Georgina had been guilty of excessive imprudence, and as great want of consideration for him. Re-

membering, too, the rebuke she had received from Lady Kingsbury, the astute Janet failed not to dwell long and deeply on the remonstrances she had tendered.

"If she had only written!" cried Perceval, bitterly. "You are certain she did not write? I can forgive everything but this utter want of thought and consideration. Are you sure she left no message?"

"Perfectly," said Janet.

"To forsake me' at such a time!" he exclaimed, mournfully; referring to his train of thought whilst travelling: "oh, I should never have expected this from Georgina. Do you think, Janet, your sister was aware of the confusion, the almost ruin, of my affairs?"

Janet extended her hand. "Dearest Perceval, that melancholy fact is known and deplored by all your friends."

"And she knew it? yes, she must have known it."

"Perhaps," cried Janet, "Georgina's feelings

have been a little—she thought she had reason to complain—but—but I ought not to speak on this subject.”

“What subject?” said Perceval, fiercely.

“You terrify me,” rejoined Janet; who, for once, really was sincere.

D’Esterre was in a state of excitement, bordering on wildness. “Tell me, then, what you mean; of what could Georgina complain? What was her grievance? Grievance, indeed! Did I not raise her from obscurity, make her the mistress of my house, my fortune? Have I ever interfered with her amusements, ever checked her wishes?”

“Be calm, dear Perceval, I entreat you.”

“I am calm,” he answered, making a mighty effort to command himself; and the feelings, though outwardly controlled, burned fiercer within. “I am calm, quite calm. Tell me, of what did she complain?”

“No, no, I ought not to sow discord, nor impart my own apprehensions.”

"You do not mean to say that you consider Georgina guilty of anything beyond imprudence and unkindness, in taking this mad journey? no, no, you cannot; the want of propriety in one sister reflects upon the other."

"Perceval," said Janet, solemnly, "I do not, would not, for the whole world, tax my poor sister with want of principle; but, when you state your surprise at conduct so totally at variance with Georgina's usual kindness, I can not refrain from expressing my opinion that pique and wounded pride have closed her heart against you, and, blinded by her jealousy—"

"Her jealousy! of whom, in the name of wonder, is she jealous? Answer me, Janet; who does your sister consider as her rival? Speak, speak, I tell you, if you would not drive me mad."

Janet paused for a moment, cast her eyes upon the ground, then, in a low, impressive manner, uttered Lady Alicia Stuart's name.

"Ridiculous;" cried Perceval, "absolutely ridiculous!"

"It is but wounded vanity;" (Janet was careful to say nothing of affection) "and wounded vanity is a bad monitress: I often reasoned with her on the subject, but in vain."

Perceval's indignation momentarily increased, and he began to pace the room as men always do when vexed or agitated, and as he walked, the angry workings of his mind shaped themselves into words, that fell as music upon Janet's ear.

"Yes," he said, "she has forsaken, left me at a time when I was looking to her for comfort, solace, support. She has deserted me, but she shall reap as she has sown: she shall remain—remain, for ever, in the obscurity, from which, in my folly, I elevated her—fool and blockhead that I was!"

"What do you mean, Perceval?"

"Mean? that Georgina and I meet no more."

"But my sister has done nothing really criminal," said Janet, well aware that to some, indeed, most dispositions, opposition to an expressed purpose is the best mode of giving it stability.

"Perhaps not; but has a wife no duty but one?"

"Oh, yes;" cried Janet, "I know, I feel all you would say, still—"

"Janet," said Perceval, stopping before her; "had I married you, would you have acted thus? Would you have thus deserted me?"

A glance—an unguarded glance, was Janet's sole reply.

Perceval started; how much that single glance disclosed! "And yet," he said, "I judged you as one of the thoughtless, giddy crowd:—I thought you, I believed you, artificial, without heart or feeling."

Janet did not answer.

"And so passed you by, and chose your sister—*she*, I believed, unsoiled by fashion, un-

contaminated. Yes, I disdained the hot-house flower, and gathered in it's stead—a weed—all wild uncultivated flowers are weeds.”

Then, again resuming his uneasy exercise, Perceval spoke of his projects, his intentions. He would not see Georgina, they should meet no more: he dared not risk an interview; she—she should remain at Atherley—remain with the friends she had preferred to him. An income sufficient for her actual wants should be assigned her. He would quit England for years, perhaps for life.

Oh, how Janet's base heart swelled with triumph, and her envious spirit gladdened, as she contemplated Georgina reduced, once more, to poverty, separated from her husband, and suffering all the pangs of disappointed affection. This was, in truth, the hour of Janet's exultation. Perceval had avowed his error in marrying Georgina, almost declared his love for her, and now she hears him doom her sister to a life of sorrow and humiliation.

But her extacy was short-lived; she lost all self-command, she felt her cheek flush, she could not check the mocking smile of joy that hovered on her lips; and, fearful lest this agitation should betray her guilty happiness, Janet hastily drew from her reticule the delicately embroidered handkerchief, and buried her countenance in it. But, in this act, Georgina's letter to her husband, which, by one of those unaccountable omissions into which even the most crafty are sometimes betrayed, she had neglected to destroy, fell at her feet.

Perceval stopped mechanically, picked up the billet, and, in so doing, read the superscription. In two minutes everything was changed.

"Janet," he said, sternly, "how is this? How is it you have dared to plot against your sister, by deceiving me? False, false Janet!"

"False!" exclaimed Janet.

"Aye, I repeat the word, false. Did you not affirm, positively affirm, you knew nothing

of this letter—that Georgina had neither written nor left a message for me?”

Janet attempted to equivocate—deny:—Perceval, infuriated, cut her short—

“Liar!” he said, in a voice of thunder—then rushed from the room and house, leaving her livid with rage, which, however, was soon succeeded by an agony of fear at the result that would certainly ensue from the exposure of her duplicity: and her active brain was soon lost in a maze of scheming, by which she might avert the evil consequences she apprehended.

Perceval darted into the street, but his mind had been wrought to a pitch of madness by the various emotions of the last few hours, and his senses reeled from the effect of the wine he had taken on a fasting stomach; he staggered a few paces, then fell to the ground, his head, which was bare, striking with violence against the curb-stone. In this state he was found by a passenger who had watched his

eccentric exit from Lady Kingsbury's, and bleeding, and in a state of almost corpse-like insensibility, Perceval was conveyed to the house he had so recently quitted.

Janet hung over him in speechless misery, and, when recovering from his frightful stupor, he burst out into the terrifying accents of delirium—when she heard his life pronounced in imminent peril — when the physicians anxiously enquired whether there had not been previous mental agitation—she felt herself to be almost his murderer! Nor was she permitted the consolation of watching by him, of endeavouring to alleviate his sufferings: even in the wildness of his mind, Perceval recognised her voice, her footstep, and became more fierce and ungovernable when she was in the room, or near his bed-side.

Even the poor comfort of remaining under the same roof with him was also denied the miserable Janet; for Lady Kingsbury's maternal vigilance became alarmed at the prospect of

the uninterrupted hours of intercourse between her niece and Sir Marcus, that her attendance on the sick would necessarily furnish; and, trembling for the possible result of the opportunities thus afforded for Janet's machinations, she reminded her of an often repeated invitation from some relations of her father's, and suggested that, as Georgina would shortly be in town, and, of course, wish to be with her husband, a spare room, which could only be ensured by her absence, would be absolutely necessary. It would, therefore, be advisable she should leave London on the following day.

Janet pleaded for delay, assured Lady Kingsbury Georgina would prefer sharing her apartment, that her presence and society would prove a comfort to her dear sister; she even hinted that to be absent herself, at this critical moment, might expose her to censure for an apparent want of feeling. But her anxiety to remain served only to increase the pertinacity

"You know how I feel
sence, and Georgina, of
his room excepting for
better be alone; and as
expecting you just no
they have assured you,
hours' notice is all th
never leave home, and
be always welcome."

"Still, to arrive an
and unexpected a man

"As you have been
have promised to avai
kindness, you, certain
expected appearance
day's post, your lett
least twenty-four h
Ramsay abundance
-ception"

Janet bit her lip, and, perceiving further remonstrance unavailable, seated herself at the writing table. Formerly, when believing she was almost essential to Lady Kingsbury's comfort, with a view to increase her influence and importance, she had greatly exaggerated the simply good-natured invitations of her country relations ; and now she reaped the fruit of her false colouring.

On the following morning, at a very early hour, the post-chaise, which was to convey Miss Irving on her unwelcome journey, stood ready packed at the hall-door. In creeping down stairs, she paused for a few moments near the opened door of the apartment, where, in agonising torture, lay the victim of her duplicity—the object of her intense anxiety—the only living being she had ever loved.

Perceval had passed a sleepless night, and was worse that morning; Janet wished to obtain the latest intelligence, she therefore lingered wistfully near the room, hoping that one of the nurses

would have occasion to leave the sick chamber. But no one stirred; the restless tossings of the poor sufferer, his hollow groans, or maniac shrieks, were all she heard. And for hours, for days, for months—in the whirl of travelling, in the seclusion of a Scottish village, amid the excitement of more animated scenes—Janet still heard those shrieks, those groans. Still, in her nightly dreams, or daytime visions, she beheld him bleeding and insensible; saw again the horror, the disgust, her presence had awakened. That look of detestation—those sounds of suffering were the last Janet ever saw or heard from Perceval D'Esterre!

CHAPTER XI.

MAURICE ARNOLD's surmise proved to be well founded ; Major Berrington's danger had been considerably exaggerated, and, on reaching Atherley, Georgina had the unspeakable happiness of finding the crisis of her father's illness past. The delight, the rapture, of again folding his daughter to his breast seemed to impart new life and vigour to the doting parent, and a rapid recovery ensued.

But when the first bright flush of joy and gratitude had passed away, Georgina became sorrowfully impressed with the alteration that had taken place in Major Berrington. It was evident that, in parting with his child, he lost

the charm by which his earthly lot had been embellished; his spirits had been broken, and his character had undergone a melancholy change. Listlessness had taken place of the former contented disposition; even his darling occupation, the care and nurture of his flowers, had been thrown aside—the garden was becoming fast a wilderness—the beds were thickly overgrown with weeds, the shrubs and bushes trailed their branches on the ground; the flowers, unpropped, untrained, seemed no unfitting emblems of their owner — all shewed neglect, and soon there would be desolation.

It was as Georgina, from her little chamber window, once more looked down upon a spot so fraught with sad, yet tender, recollections, that she fully realised how great a change had passed upon her father.

“Yes,” said the old servant, who, after assisting at the toilet, still lingered in the room, and from Mrs. D’Esterre’s countenance divined her thoughts:—“what you’re saying in your mind,

ma'am, is just what I've said a thousand and a thousand times, when I've looked out, and seen the plants all going to rack and ruin in that way. Nobody would think that's the same beautiful garden you and master used to be so fond of."

"It has, indeed, been sadly neglected. I fear, papa no longer takes the same interest in his flowers as he did formerly."

"La, ma'am, master doesn't care for nothing now. After you were gone, he lost all heart, and didn't seem to care whether he lived or died. He would sit for hours there in the parlour, thinking of you, I suppose; and though I used to try to get him out and make him move about a bit, 'twas all to no purpose. And as for the garden—why, I do really believe, master fretted and cried so much about your going and leaving him for Mr. D'Esterre, that his eyes got worse, and I don't think he could have seen to do the flowers, if he had wished it ever so much. But now you've been here once,

ma'am, I do hope as how you'll often come and cheer his spirits ; it is very sad for an old gentleman like master to be always living by himself. You'll write often, anyhow. I thought master always seemed to get better when he had heard from you."

Georgina's heart lay heavy in her breast : she thought of her father pining in her absence, yearning for an invitation to her house, wounded by her neglect—that father who had been every thing to her—who, even in her marriage, had sacrificed his own comfort to her welfare. And how had she requited all his care and tenderness ? All those thousand proofs of his affection which now came rushing on her mind ? What had she done to mark her gratitude ? How sought to testify her love ?

Georgina shrunk from the enquiry ; for, alas, she too well knew she might not meet it without shame. The plea of ignorance she dared not urge, for Charlotte Arnold's letters rose in evidence against her : and it could not be de-

nied that, in neglecting to propose, even, if necessary, insist, upon his being asked to Ringland, she had been guilty of excessive weakness.

It was true, Lady Gertrude would have sneered, and she was afraid of Lady Gertrude; it was also true that, by dwelling much upon the subject, she risked annoying Perceval—and her affection for her husband sealed her lips. Still was she to blame: in the pursuance of a right course, we must not shrink from consequences; and if affection interpose between us and duty, from that moment it becomes idolatrous—may not be listened to—yea, rather should be watched with jealousy and fear.

Many a bitter pang Georgina felt, as she considered all that the last short twelvemonth had brought forth; and when Charlotte Arnold joined her, not long after, she was struck with the distress so strongly painted on her cousin's countenance.

“My dear Georgina, what is it? Have you heard any unpleasant tidings? Or are you suffering?”

"Yes, oh yes, I do suffer reproach, bitter self-reproach. My father, my poor father! Charlotte, do you know, I almost wish I had never left him."

"Nay, nay, Major Berrington himself would hardly choose to hear you utter such a sentiment, and I shall not allow it. Besides, it is not true—Georgy, you know it is not," Charlotte playfully replied.

"How is it, Charlotte, that *you* are always equal to your duties? Whilst *I*——"

"Dearest Georgina, I have never been placed in a position similar to yours; if I had, rely upon it, my conscience would have accused me just as yours does now."

"Oh no, no, it would not: I am convinced *you* would always do the right thing; but I am so weak, so vacillating, that even when the path is straight before me I have not strength to keep it. Charlotte, dear Charlotte, teach me how I may attain your force of character; for, indeed, indeed, I mean in future to act very

differently. So you must counsel me ; and to begin, tell me how it happens that, while I yield so culpably to fear and impulse, you are guided by principle alone ?”

“ Georgy, you overrate, indeed you overrate, my consistency.”

“ If I only knew—” cried Georgina : “ if I could only see my duty clearly.”

“ Here is a guide, wise and infallible.”

Charlotte took Georgina’s bible from the dressing-table and read aloud, “ In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths.”

“ True ; but I am so uncertain, so apt to change. I resolve one minute, and the next, find myself acting diametrically opposite to my intention, and this, because I want courage and strength to follow as my conscience teaches.”

Charlotte had again recourse to the sacred volume. “ It is written,” she said, “ ‘ He giveth power to the faint, and to them that have no might, he encreaseth strength’ ! Georgina, you must ask for strength, and ask it in full confi-

dence that your supplication will be heard. Man of himself can do no one good thing."

They were now joined by Rebecca, holding in her hand an open letter, and evidently the bearer of unpleasant news: but Georgina, entirely occupied with her own distressing thoughts, without giving her cousin time to address her, at once expressed her determination to quit Atherly only in company with Major Berrington.

"I will never leave papa, again;" he shall live with us at Ringland; I will make a point of it, and then I know Perceval will not refuse me."

"Make no resolutions, my dear Georgina;" rejoined Rebecca, "resolutions are never kept; such an one as yours, especially: no man likes to have his wife's relations saddled upon him."

"But papa is so helpless."

"The very reason Mr. D'Esterre would less approve of your plan. No, no, Georgina, come and see your father, pay him the compliment of inviting him to your house (I don't

think he would go—however that's no matter) he would be pleased at the attention ; but don't be laying plans, which you will not be able to realize : you will only disappoint yourself and him, and, I'm sure, there are trials enough in this world, without making others for ourselves."

"But papa cannot continue living in this miserable manner—this wretched old house is perfectly uninhabitable."

"I have a scheme in my head," said Rebecca : "your cousins are beginning to wish for a change ; complaining of the dullness of Atherly, say, there's no chance of their getting married, and so on ; so I have promised to try a season at some watering place, and I will coax your father to come too, and if we all like it, why, you know, there will be no occasion to return here—so, set your mind at rest about the Major."

Rebecca, voluble as she was, found it difficult to break the news of Perceval's precarious state to his unconscious wife ; and, after a few fruitless attempts, placed the letter, containing

the intelligence, in Georgina's hand. Georgina was absolutely stunned by this fresh, additional calamity, and it was a happy circumstance that there was at hand a kind and active friend to direct and guide her.

She left Atherley in company with Miss Rocket. Arrived in town, Mrs. D'Esterre alighted at Lady Kingsbury's, and Rebecca drove to Grosvenor-street; where, thinking her presence in London would be advantageous to her young relative, she accepted the offer of a bed: but the creditors having fulfilled their threat, an execution had taken place in the house—indeed, but for his dangerous illness, Perceval, himself, would probably have been arrested.

Thus disappointed of a resting place, Rebecca thought of her old lodging in Arundel street, but it was too distant; Willow Villa, also, lay under the same objection; she then made enquiry of a policeman, who was passing, for a lodging, and was told that in Mount-street she might find what she was in search of. A sister

of his let furnished apartments, and would be happy to accommodate her. Now, this sister happened to be married to a grocer the apartments therefore were not inviting, but the distance suited, and Rebecca did not care for trifles; she knew no other place of refuge, and, finally, having beaten down her landlady (Rebecca always looked to prudence and thrifty management), the kind-hearted old spinster took possession of her fragrant domicile with more cheerfulness than, I fear, I should have done.

CHAPTER XII.

ON reaching Bruton Street, Georgina had not courage to enquire for her husband; hardly dared she venture to raise her eyes, lest the closed window shutters should tell that all was over. Rebecca, however, blunt and straightforward, and less deeply interested in the issue, readily supplied the deficiency; and, in answer to her interrogations, Georgina heard that Perceval, though quite irrational and even given over, was still alive.

“Come, come, Georgina, don’t be cast down—Mr. D’Esterre is not gone, and you know whilst there’s life there’s hope. I dare say it’s not so bad as the servant says—these sort of

people always make the worst of everything. Keep your spirits up, dear, if you don't, you'll be of no use to Perceval: it won't do to be sobbing and crying in a sick person's room.—Now go in, and tell Lady Kingsbury that I am not come to force myself into a house where I'm not invited, but to look after you, and nurse your husband. I shall sleep and take my meals in Grosvenor-street, just do nothing here but make myself of use.—Good bye, love, for the present; now remember what I say, don't be agitated.”

Georgina did restrain herself, and she entered the house where, for the time, death seemed to hold his court, with a calmness that surprised herself. Sir Marcus Kingsbury met her at the foot of the stairs, and, in silence, placed her hand beneath his arm. Even he, volatile as he was, had been tamed into feeling and consideration; and this trifling circumstance served, perhaps, more than any other, to assure her of her husband's hopeless state.

"Let me go to him," she cried to Lady Kingsbury ; "let me see him."

"My dearest Georgina, it seems almost needless—an unnecessary trial of your feelings. Perceval knows no one ; I really think—Dr. H., don't you agree with me in thinking Mrs. D'Esterre should spare herself?"

But Georgina would listen to no remonstrance : a minute more, and she was in the dark, solemn chamber, standing in hopeless agony by the dying bed of him whom, but a few, a very few short days before, she had seen in the full flush of youthful health, in all ambition's eagerness and hope. And now he lies insensible and speechless—his eyes fast closed, his features dragged, his low and painful moanings, and his hurried breath caught at short intervals, while giving token of prolonged existence, telling also how fierce the struggle with his mighty foe. Georgina's fancied wrongs were all forgiven ; she remembered their last interview, and, with grief recalled the sorrowful

and half angry feeling that had followed on her part ; she contrasted it with all his kindness, the many proofs of his affection he had lavished on her ; and she felt as much remorse and misery as though, in harbouring harsh thoughts of him, she had been guilty of an actual crime.

“ Oh that I might hear him speak again—that I might listen to his voice once more ! But I shall not—it may not be. He is lost, lost to me for ever. A few short hours and it will all be over !”

But the deadly shaft was turned aside.—The next day, Perceval was lingering still in life, although upon the very threshold of the grave : and Georgina sat beside his bed in all the sickening, agonising misery which fastens on the heart in that dread hour, when we dare not look beyond the present moment, all trying though it be—for with the next may come the certainty, the realisation of bereavement. To-day we yet possess our earthly treasure—to-morrow's dawn may find us desolate—alone.

It was not until the fourth morning, after her arrival in London, that a ray of returning consciousness afforded promise of D'Esterre's recovery. Georgina's anxious watchfulness first detected the improvement, but she dared not trust herself with the belief, the hope, a change so much desired, were not, in fact, a mere delusive fancy of her brain.

But a long, deep sleep, into which Perceval shortly after fell, was hailed by the physicians as a favourable omen; and when he shook off the sweet, refreshing slumber, it was evident the malady was giving way.

Oh, how Georgina's bosom swelled with gratitude, how her heart bounded, when, after more than one effort to overcome his excessive weakness, Perceval pronounced her name.

"Georgy, dearest Georgy, is that you? Where are you? Why did you go? Why did you leave me?" Georgina put her finger on her lip.

"Perceval, you must not speak."

But he would not be restrained—"But, tell me, where have you been?"

"At Atherley, dear Perceval. Papa was ill, thought to be dying, and I went down to him; but he is better now—and you, too, dearest, you are restored to me," replied Georgina, her voice choking with emotion.

"My dear Georgina," interposed Lady Kingsbury, "I shall not suffer this. Perceval must be kept perfectly quiet, or there will be a relapse; you must command yourself, you must indeed. If you cannot, I shall send you back to Atherley."

"No, no," said Perceval, in the faintest whisper, and feebly holding her hand in his; "Georgina will never leave me again, I am confident she will not."

"'Georgina will never leave me again?'" "Georgina will never leave me again?" repeated Mrs. D'Esterre to herself. "What does he mean, and why does he speak of my going to my father at such a moment, as though I

had been guilty of unkindness towards him ? Surely his mind must wander still !”

Months elapsed before Georgina fully understood the import of those words.

It was Mr. D'Esterre's fortune to be well and wisely nursed : Lady Kingsbury proved herself judicious, and Georgina devoted, and Rebecca useful. From Lady Gertrude's presence he was happily exempt, as the following letter will explain—

“ MY DEAR PERCEVAL,

“ The account of your illness shocked me extremely ; I should, of course, have travelled up to London post haste, could I have been of any use in nursing you ; but it so happened that, owing to my having been upon the move, I received my letters irregularly ; indeed, I heard of your first seizure, danger, and prospect of recovery, at the same time : but I shall still hold myself in readiness to travel ; if, therefore, the accounts do not continue favourable, you may expect to see me.—I have been interrupted by Mrs. D'Esterre's communication bringing a still more comfortable report, by which I feel,

of course, much gratified. And now, my dear Perceval, I must say a few words respecting your illness, the nature of which I hardly understand ; but it seems to me to be something of a fever, brought on, no doubt, by some imprudence—drinking cold water when heated, or something of that kind ; pray be more cautious in future. Georgina has been exceedingly remiss in giving so few particulars. I beg you will express my wish that in her next she will be more explicit.

“ I shall not now allude to your folly in standing for S—, excepting to remark that, had you waited to consult me on the subject, I should most assuredly have advised you against so imprudent and expensive a step ; nor will I say more respecting the confusion of your affairs (which I have learnt principally from public report), than that it is exactly what I expected from the moment of your rash and unfortunate marriage. However, it is too late now to repent of that, or any other imprudence you have been led into : all that can be done is, by care and good management, to try and recover some portion of your fortune. Of course, you will part with the house in Grosvenor-street, and exchange Ringland for some cheaper residence. On many accounts, I should advise the continent.

“ I will not occupy you longer now, as I suppose

you are still too weak to bear much thinking, but I shall hope to hear from you every particular respecting your plans, when you find yourself equal to writing; and, in the mean time, I must beg that Georgina will write frequently, and with more accuracy and detail. With kind remembrances to Lady Kingsbury, and her charming niece, who, I conclude, is with her, although Mrs. D'Esterre does not mention her sister's name,

“I remain,

“Your affectionate mother,

Friday.

“GERTRUDE D'ESTERRE.”

“If you go abroad, I wish you would winter at Paris; I think the plan I formerly proposed might still be carried into effect. Eleanor Lindsay, your cousin, is grown an exceedingly fine young woman; not exactly handsome, but lady-like and highly accomplished. Lord Lindsay gives her fifteen thousand pounds upon her marriage, and on his death will leave her the same sum; the member for R—— is also his nominee. I often wish—but it is no use thinking of the past.”

“How like my mother!” cried Perceval, peevishly; “for ever harping on the same old story—I wonder she’s not tired of it herself,

by this time ; but, I really do believe that, had a man been unfortunate enough to shoot his brother, she would never cease talking to him of the accident."

"What is the subject Lady Gertrude is so fond of?" enquired Georgina, a little hurt by Perceval's not showing her his mother's letter.

"My folly and extravagance ; what else should it be? I'm sure, a very unpleasant subject, isn't it, Georgy?"

"Don't fret yourself with thinking of such things now, dearest Perceval ; anxiety will only increase your illness."

"Nay, but I must think, and seriously, too."

In spite of her uncomfortable domicile, Miss Rocket was happy enough in London. When not in Mr. D'Esterre's room, she usually spent her time wandering about the streets, looking in at the shop-windows, and sometimes making purchases. On one occasion she lost her way, on another had her pocket all but picked—but no more serious accident occurred: she was

neither knocked down in turning a sharp corner, nor run over by an omnibus; rare escapes, when ladies perambulate the thoroughfares of the metropolis, in these days.

"There, Georgy," she said, entering the drawing-room, on her return from one of these exploring expeditions, with a large red leather book in her hand. "There's something to keep, in remembrance of me."

"Thank you, my dear cousin, but what is it: an account-book?"

"Yes, an account-book; and, if you make a proper use of it, you'll find it one of the best gifts you have ever received. See—on this side, you are to put down all the money you receive, on that, every farthing you lay out; do it daily, and, at the end of every week, see whether your accounts agree."

"I was always a terrible accountant," said Georgina.

"Then, you must learn to be a better one in future, for Mr. D'Esterre's sake, if for no other

reason ; a great portion both of a man's comfort and prosperity depend upon the manner in which his wife manages the household expenditure. Now, don't be frightened by a little trouble in the beginning ; do it regularly, and you 'll soon get used to it. Above all, be careful to keep within the limits of the sum you and Mr. D'Esterre resolve to devote to every day's expenses ; as far as possible, pay ready money for every thing you buy ; never to incur a debt of any kind is the secret of living respectably on a small income ; and, for some time to come, you will have no other."

"I fear Perceval will feel the change terribly."

"You must reconcile him to it ; and, be sure and keep him within bounds as to expense."

"Oh, Miss Rocket, how can I ?"

"How can you ? why, very well ; with care and judgment, a woman may do a great deal with such a man as Perceval."

"Miss Rocket is right," remarked Lady Kingsbury ; "a married man is almost always what his wife makes him."

"Pshaw," said Sir Marcus, who, being exceedingly entertained with Rebecca's quaintness, generally honoured the drawing-room with his presence when she was there—"I don't believe one word of it: at least, I know no woman shall make what she likes of me."

"We shall see, Sir Marcus," replied Rebecca laughing: "I'm very much mistaken, if you're not one day under petticoat government—your lady will keep you in excellent order, I'll be bound."

"No such thing: I wouldn't be kept in order by my wife, even though she were the Venus de Medicis herself, or—even you, Miss Rocket," he said, with mock gallantry.

"Perhaps, you don't intend to marry at all."

"Very likely not—but when I do——"

"Well, what then?"

"Why, I won't marry one of your managing ladies; but a gentle, affectionate girl, who wouldn't contradict me for the whole world."

"And, therefore, will govern you the more completely."

"No, no; not to govern me at all, I tell you."

"I suppose, Marcus," observed Georgina, "whenever you do give us a new relation, it will be something of the *rara avis* species."

"No," replied Sir Marcus, "I don't expect a great deal."

"What, to begin with? Beauty?"

"Oh yes, of course."

"And fortune?"

"I shouldn't object to ten or fifteen thousand pounds."

"Shall she be clever?"

"No—decidedly not. Clever women look down upon their husbands."

"Accomplished?"

"I don't care much about accomplishments—but I like to see a woman walk and dance well."

"Ah," thought Lady Kingsbury, "then that story of Mademoiselle Leblanc, I heard yesterday, is true I suppose."

Perhaps, the young Baronet guessed what was passing in his mother's mind, for he immediately subjoined—

“At any rate, my *Dulcinea* must have blood—I think as much of pedigree in women, as in horses.”

“I trust, Marcus,” observed his mother with some emphasis, “you will adhere to that opinion. Independent of other considerations, no man has a right to degrade his family by introducing an improper connexion amongst its members.”

“What selfish beings women are!” said Sir Marcus to himself—and left the room.

Perceval rallied, though slowly; but his restoration to health was greatly impeded by anxiety, and the necessity of forming some decisive plan respecting the future regulation of his affairs.

There was on this subject a diversity of opinions; Lady Gertrude, as we have already seen, revived her Continental scheme. Lady

Kingsbury suggested a residence at Ringland with a reduced establishment—Rebecca, on the other hand, fond of root and branch measures, proposed a still more economical plan. The deceased Mr. D'Esterre, a keen sportsman, had purchased a small hunting box in one of the wildest parts of the north of Devon, and this residence Miss Rocket thought might be made perfectly available for some years to come; while Ringland, let to a respectable tenant, instead of being an expense, would assist in clearing its owner's difficulties.

"It's no use attempting to live in a place like that, without a suitable income. It would be impossible. You couldn't do it on eight hundred or a thousand a year; you might as well try to build a house with butterfly's wings. It would not answer at all—besides your old acquaintances would look down upon you, and nobody likes that."

"I am afraid, however, Miss Rocket, that your notion of Knowlescombe is not feasible;

it is, if I remember rightly (for I have not been there for years), a mere nut-shell, only fit for a bachelor—rooms about twelve feet square, and so low I could scarcely stand upright in them; even Georgina would run a risk of knocking her head against the ceiling.”

“If the house is small, all the better; you will be spared the expense of entertaining. And then, with respect to the height of the rooms, Georgina has lived in a cottage before now; and for yourself—no one bends more gracefully than you do,” rejoined Rebecca with a sort of gallant air that brought a smile to Perceval’s parched lips, but failed to reconcile him to her suggestion.

“Georgina,” he said, afterwards, to his solicitous and anxious nurse, “Georgina, I don’t at all fancy this scheme of your cousin Rocket’s—her remarks with respect to Ringland, though, are true enough, I should not like to be looked down upon. So there remains nothing but the Continent—we must, however, contrive to steer

clear of Lady Gertrude ; we have had too much of her already this year ; she's bad enough in England, and abroad she would be insufferable—but a little tact and management would do it. If we could remain abroad about five or six years, all would come right. What do you say to it, Georgy ? Do you think you could make up your mind to leave England for so long a time ? We would spend part of it in Switzerland and part in Italy—fine country, Italy, lovely climate, plenty to interest the mind. Georgy, you will like Italy, I am sure you will—so much to see, to hear, to think upon—I shall have your bust taken when we are at Rome—we will spend a winter there, and one at Naples. Yes, yes," he concluded with animation, and slightly rubbing his hands, "my mother is right for once; the continent is our best plan. What are you hiding your face for ? Come, look up, and tell me, like a good little wife, that you are of my mind."

"Perceval, my father—"

“ True, I forgot your father.”

For the time, the conversation dropped ; Georgina dreaded its renewal.

D'Esterre was evidently disappointed at the failure of his newly adopted plan, nor could she but observe that he was fractious and irritable during the remainder of the day ; and that, although when the topic was again resumed, he announced his decision in favour of Knowlescombe, there was petulance in his tone of voice, and in his mind an evident disposition to cavil and find fault. Georgina was, however, firm ; it was a painful task to thwart him, but it was one of duty ; and, at the cost of many a struggle between contending feelings, she still persevered. When, therefore, sufficiently recovered to bear the motion of a carriage, they proceeded by slow stages to the North of Devon.

CHAPTER XIII.

KNOWLESCOMBE was not precisely the small, inconvenient place, Perceval had described : still it was nothing but a cottage residence. Two sitting-rooms, sixteen feet square, with two smaller, of, perhaps, upon twelve, the ground floor, and corresponding sleeping ones above, constituted the dwelling ; and about three acres of garden, an orchard and a paddock, the grounds.

But the situation was one of exceeding loveliness. The house was placed at the extremity of a valley, deep and sequestered, and shut in by hills, from whose peaked summits, in some parts clothed with wood, in others

bare and grey, many a rill came leaping down from crag to crag, until it mingled with the stream below.

Beautiful it was from that dark glen to gaze upon the sky above, so blue, so pure, and so serenely calm—and fair the distant view of ocean that repaid your toil in climbing the embattled cliffs. It was a spot to please the heart of laughing childhood, for, in each nook and tiny glade, the wild flower grew in rich and fanciful profusion—and youth had loved the bold adventure of its walks and rambles—and sorrowing age, heart-sick and weary of the world, had, in that sweet retired vale, beheld a quiet resting place—the painter would have sketched its charms—the tourist lingered in the neighbourhood.

But there exists a wide difference between admiring a pretty cottage from without, and being domiciled within—between a hasty visit, and a lasting residence. For the first few days that followed the D'Esterres' arrival at their

future home, Perceval could almost participate in the warmth with which Georgina, happy to escape from London with its noise and smoke, felt all the beauties of their new abode. He agreed that nothing could be prettier or more picturesque; and that, with a few additions to the furniture, Knowlescombe would really become a very pleasant residence.

But this happy state of feeling soon evaporated: a few days, and Perceval had discovered that the chimnies smoked, that the house was inconveniently small, that the windows rattled, and admitted nearly as much air as they excluded—in a word, that it was an exceedingly uncomfortable place. Then, there was no society, no neighbourhood within available distance. The servants, of a very different stamp from those he had been used to, were pronounced unbearably stupid, they neither understood his wishes, nor obeyed his orders. He became restless, peevish and discontented; and it required all Georgina's natural sweetness

of disposition, all her affection for her husband, together with her reliance on a higher Power, to enable her to bear with gentleness and patience, Perceval's frequent fits of fretful irritation : but her path lay plain before her, and she steadily pursued it.

It was a sharp autumnal evening — Mr. D'Esterre, again and again, had stirred the fire, he had drawn the curtains, tried the door, nothing would shut out the draughts, or warm the room. So, at least, he said : Georgina thought the apartment overheated. In fact, he wanted occupation ; she saw this, and begged him to read to her. D'Esterre read a few pages, but in so absent and uninterested a manner, she felt sorry she had proposed it.— Suddenly, he took out his watch, —(it was about ten minutes since he last consulted)— it, but now, happy circumstance for an idle gentleman who knew not what to do with himself, the hour was come when he might legitimately order coffee. He rang for that purpose, and coffee was served.

"What wretched stuff!" said D'Esterre, setting down a cup of most uninviting looking beverage. "Mrs. Thompson must, really, —"

"You forget, Perceval, I am housekeeper now—a very inefficient one, you will say. The fact is, I have been disappointed: I ordered some coffee from town, which ought to have been here by this time, but as Mr. W. failed to send it, I was forced to take some from B—. The dealer assured me it was good."

"As good as everything else in this infernal place—we had better by half have gone abroad. No existing here—look at that confounded chimney, just see how it smokes."

Georgina said nothing, but she thought that, if her husband would refrain from stirring the fire so immediately after it had been replenished, they might escape the grievance.

"Georgina," he said, after a brief silence, "I think Knowlescombe does not agree with you, you look ill and out of spirits. I'm confident this climate does not suit you."

"Indeed, I have no reason to think so; as for my looks and spirits, they will improve when you are better."

"Better!" rejoined Perceval, in a tone of surprise and slight vexation, "what do you mean, Georgina? my health is excellent."

To say the truth, not only had D'Esterre lost all traces of his illness, but he had acquired a trifling degree of embonpoint, which, as he piqued himself on the symmetrical elegance of his figure, had still further tended to put him out of humour with his present residence.

"I mean, Perceval, that my looks and spirits will improve, when you are more yourself—more what you were a year ago."

"As for that, Georgina, I don't suppose either you or I should expect to be exactly what we were a twelvemonth back. We, or at least, I, have learnt a lesson or two since then, which I shall not easily forget. I feel ten years older at the very least."

"True," replied Georgina, "we are both

altered, both older ; but, as we gain experience, we must be careful that we do not lose our——our cheerfulness.”

“ You mean good temper, I suppose.”

Such had been Georgina’s meaning, and she did not deny it. Perceval felt excessively indignant. No man relishes a lesson from his wife’s lips : and, if she be usually mild and forbearing, the outbreak, far from pleasing by its novelty, becomes still more distasteful ; especially if, as in this instance, the rebuke be not wholly undeserved.

Mr. D’Esterre, I say, felt very much offended ; and not another syllable did he condescend to lavish upon the delinquent during the remainder of that evening.

“ Georgina,” he said, on the following day, “ if we are to spend all our lives in this abominable place—what will you do for amusement ? as the spring advances, every one will be in town, will you not wish to go also ? If you do, I suppose we might contrive to manage a few weeks at an hotel.”

Perceval made this suggestion, not that he entertained any serious thoughts of such an undertaking, but, simply, because he knew nothing vexed Georgina half so much as a proposal to leave Knowlescombe—not a particularly amiable method of proceeding ; but, unluckily, a common one.. When thwarted in their inclinations, men and women also are exceedingly apt to vent their spleen on the first legitimate object that presents itself ; and thus, children are punished, servants reprimanded, and wives or husbands teased according to the sex and station of the offended party. As, in the present instance, it was the husband whose temper was out of joint, his wife, of course, became the recipient of his irritation.

“Not for me, Perceval, at any rate,” replied Georgina, “I have not the faintest wish for gaiety.”

“Last spring you went out constantly.”

“Because Janet wished it. And you were so much from home.” Georgina might have added “And your mother so unbearable.”

“And you can, really, make up your mind to remain quietly, for ever, in this wretched place—the house is not much better than a pauper’s?”

“Nay, Perceval, you are unjust in speaking thus of Knowlescombe; besides, my father’s house was even of a humbler description, and I was perfectly happy there.”

“Aye—happier than you have been since. Yes, Georgina, it would, perhaps, have been better for you—for both of us, if you had never left it.”

“If you wish to send me from you, Perceval, I will return to Atherley,” replied Georgina in quivering accents.

“Nay, nay, Georgy, I was not in earnest—’twas a joke, nothing but a joke.”

“This is too serious a subject for jesting,” and, concealing her face in her handkerchief, Georgina left the room.

“How weak her spirits are, how nervous she must be,” thought Perceval; but the monitor within told him his young wife’s agitation had a

far deeper source than bodily indisposition; and then her father's admonition flashed upon his mind. How had that warning been responded to by him? He dared not answer—well.

Woe to the fond—the loving heart, that feels each unkind word as though it were a drop of liquid fire. Hail! leaden apathy, and cold indifference, and dull insensibility! for ye, alone, are fit to brave and meet unharmed, the grating fretfulness and the discordant jars that mark so painfully the intercourse of man with man. Is it not strange that we should use our *minute* of existence to hurt, and vex, and jostle one another, as if life had not in itself, sufficiency of ill?

It was not to weep, Georgina sought her chamber; hers was not the grief which can thus expend and soothe itself. Her cheek was colourless, her lips compressed, her eye dull, fixed, and all unmoistened by a tear. It is not pride—it is not anger—but hopelessness that lays its icy hand upon a heart, erewhile joy's favourite

resting place, and paralyzes all its springs, and creeps with torpid poison through each vein.

Had it then come to this? Was she, indeed, a clog, a weariness, a chain he longed to break? Yes—for his lips had even now avowed the mortifying truth, and all his previous actions seemed but confirmation of his words. Except for her—Perceval might yet be happy, still taste the pleasures most congenial to his mind—without her, he might, once more, lead the gay and roving life his fancy panted after. And such was the return for all her love—her deep, unswerving love—he wished to separate!

Georgina cherishes but one desire—insensibility. One only hope—that the poor heart thus carelessly disdained, may break, or cease to feel.

It may be, she will find her wish has been fulfilled; for this difference may be observed between the feelings of her sex and Perceval's; a man will bear but little *for* the woman of his choice, but a great deal *from* her—indeed, I'm

much inclined to think he likes her all the better for teasing him, sometimes. Woman, on the other hand, counts few sacrifices too costly for the object of her attachment ; but her affection must be fed by his, or like a blighted flower it will fade and die. I know there are exceptions to this observation, still, in the majority of cases, it will be found correct.

“ Georgina, will you walk ? ” asked Perceval, gently opening the door of the apartment ; “ the air may be of service to you. The clouds seem inclined to break ; so, if we lose no time, we may secure a walk between the showers.”

Georgina tried to answer cheerfully, but her voice was ill-sustained—her dark eye dim, and the light, which, as she turned her head, fell full upon her face, shewed Perceval how sunk and faded had the cheek become. He advanced a few steps nearer, and, gazing earnestly upon her, said, in a tone of heartfelt tenderness—

“ My poor Georgina—”

My—how much that little pronoun may dis-

cover. It told Georgina that, in spite of all his petulance, she was endeared to Perceval; and, in an instant, a smile of hope and joy lit up her countenance.

With proud satisfaction, Mr. D'Esterre remarked this evidence of her affection—this token of his power; and his heart smote him for the unkindness he had been guilty of, in paining thus the feelings of a being so affectionate—so devotedly attached to him.

“My love, you give too much weight to a mere word spoken in haste, and without a shadow of meaning—”

“Say that again, Perceval, say that again. Tell me, once more, you do not really wish to part.”

“Nothing is farther from my wishes,” he replied, raising the head which softly rested on his shoulder, that he might once more read his triumph in her tall-tale eyes—“I never for an instant thought of such a thing. Foolish—

foolish girl, to let yourself be overcome by a silly jest."

"Still, truth is sometimes said in jest."

"Not such truth as that, Georgy. But we are losing the fine weather—come, get your bonnet, quick. Stay—let me be your *Femme de Chambre*."

A brighter star was rising for Georgina.

CHAPTER XIV.

RETURN we now to Janet, whom we left, very reluctantly, travelling the great northern road; a disinclination, the nature of the place she was about to visit was ill calculated to diminish.

Kittlestainhaugh was a straggling, melancholy village, containing many dirty, wretched hovels, a few cottages of a better description, and, perhaps, four or five houses appertaining to persons who might be considered by others, or, who considered themselves, genteel. Amongst these, that occupied by Mrs. Ramsay and the Miss Irvings stood as pre-eminent for size and beauty, as the ladies did for superiority of con-

nexion, and, probably, wealth; although, in the latter respect they were not, according to our English notions, entitled to much consideration.

They were kind, simple-hearted people, fond of lecturing the lower orders, and of teaching at the school, they, in conjunction with the Laird, had been instrumental in establishing. They gave medicine and advice gratis, made flannel garments and preserves—occupied one room only for breakfast, and luncheon, and dinner, and all—occasionally invited their neighbours to drink tea, and accepted invitations in return. They never read — even newspapers possessed no charms for them; and, beyond the chit-chat of the village and neighbourhood, their thoughts wandered but seldom; their conversation, which was, however, incessant—never. In short, Mrs. Ramsay and the Miss Irvings were very worthy people, but very dull.

But, although cast in a mould so different, these good ladies were quite disposed to like, even to

love their young relative—she was overwhelmed with kindness. And Janet, whose natural thirst for popularity was quickened with the reflection that (to say nothing of the policy of conciliating the individuals upon whose hospitality she was thrown) substantial benefits in the shape of pounds, shillings, and pence might be the future consequence of their partiality, neglected no means of winning the regard and affection of her simple-minded hostesses. She worked with them, walked with them, and, far from evincing any distaste for Kittlestainhaugh and its society, affirmed, again and again, she had never been more happy and contented in her life.

“You must just stay with us, altogether, Janet,” said Miss Irving.

Janet declared her perfect readiness; and then sat up half the night writing such an epistle as would, she trusted, soften Lady Kingsbury’s heart and induce her recal. The answer gave a death-blow to every hope of the kind. Sir Marcus was on the point of taking a wife

to himself, and Lady Kingsbury, very much displeased with the marriage, fancied herself far gone in a consumption, persuaded her Physician to order her to the South of Europe for three years, and, accompanied by one of the Miss Fitzgroves, proposed setting off as speedily as possible.

Tears sprang to Janet's eyes as she read the letter: it was evident Lady Kingsbury had shaken her off for ever. She then, with unparalleled meanness, wrote with the same motive to Georgina; but Georgina's answer, cold, short, and guarded, had manifestly been, in great measure, dictated by Perceval, and she saw that door was also closed against her.

Thus time passed, and every day increased the irksomeness of her present residence—for if a dreary country village, and an establishment limited to the very narrowest scale, and tiresome society, and uncongenial occupation, be trying in the sweet summer months, when nature's brightness and her beauty offer some compen-

sation for other annoyances ; when the fresh breeze, the fair prospect, the glad aspect of all around, will at times invigorate the spirits, impart a healthy frame of feeling, and make us forget our indoor worries—how is it in the dark winter season when there is neither cheerfulness within the house nor pleasant change without ? —Janet would tell you, “ do not make the trial, unless you wish to drown yourself in yonder mill-stream.”

It was a close, damp, December afternoon, Janet had been teaching at the school. Of all her lately adopted pursuits, this was the most dissonant to her natural taste and disposition. Some people like teaching for its own sake, others look upon the scriptural and moral education of the lower orders as a duty the rich owe the poor, and, from this conviction, derive both patience and perseverance. But Janet belonged to neither class : she disliked children—despised the poor—and never entered the noisy school-room without loathing. Still

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perceived from the parlour window, the door was thrown open by Miss Lizzie Irving, who, at the same time, half drew, half pushed, her into the room.

“Come in, come in, Janet,” cried Mrs. Ramsay. “Here is our good neighbour, the Laird—my Lord, I beg your pardon, Lord Culross I mean. Janet, Lord Culross—Lord Culross, Miss Janet Irving.”

Janet curtsied mechanically to a heavy, farmer-like looking man, about eight and thirty, who had half extended his hand towards her; but, perceiving no intimation of a similar cordiality of feeling on her part, blushed, and dropped into the nearest chair.

“Come, Janet, come into the fire—Lord Culross, you’re sitting upon the door. Now give his Lordship some account of what you have been about; you know, the school’s just Drumattrie’s delight, honest man—ye’ll just tell him all about it.”

“How’s Peggie Crackstraw’s cough? And did

she take the mixture I sent down last night?" enquired Miss Irving.

"But, perhaps, ye'll be wet in the feet this damp afternoon," observed Miss Lizzie, glancing at Janet's muddy shoes.

"No, no, she can't be wet in the feet," said Miss Irving. "What was to wet her, now the new causeway is laid down?"

Janet's thin shoes were, in truth, saturated with damp, and just at present nothing could be more oppressive than to sit in her walking dress, close to a warm fire in a small hot room; but policy, her usual monitor, prevailing against inclination, she took the seat allotted to her, and, with apparent cheerful interest, gave every information respecting Peggie Crackstraw, and all the other little charmers, whom, however, she felt more than half inclined to throttle.

Had Janet acted from the simple wish of obliging, her conduct must have challenged admiration; but, as it was dictated by sordid interest alone, it was despicable to the last de-

gree. But, whatever were her motives and secret feelings, Lord Culross listened to her account with eagerness. He paid an unconscionably long visit, and, as he left the room, a peculiar telegraphic look passed between the elder ladies, which was repeated, when, in the course of the evening, Janet assured Miss Lizzie that she had never met with a more aristocratic looking person—"he had," she said, "quite the air of a man of fashion."

If Mr. Burchell had been present when Janet made this assertion he would have answered, "fudge." And if Mrs. Ramsay and her sisters had been expert physiognomists, they must have noticed the lurking smile of irony that Janet vainly endeavoured to repress. But Mr. Burchell, we all know, lives only in Goldsmith's animated pages—and the *elderly sisters* were too sincere and single-hearted themselves to suspect, much less, detect, artifice in others.

A short time after, on leaving the scene of her almost daily penance, Miss Janet Irving

was met and accosted by Lord Culross; she would have merely bowed and passed on, but some light flakes of snow were falling, and, as he held an umbrella in his hand, it was no more than common courtesy that he should offer to escort her home; and a remark upon the weather was, under such circumstances, at once national and natural.

"It 's a very severe day, this, Miss Janet, uncommonly severe; I almost wonder at your venturing out. Are you sure it 's altogether prudent? You should remember that our winters are not exactly what you have been used to in the south."

"Nay, you must not say a word against the Scottish climate; I delight so much in the clear bracing air of Kittlestainhaugh."

"Aye, aye?"

"At least," continued Janet, apprehensive from the sudden, unusual animation of her listener's countenance, that she had made too bold an assertion—"I seldom remember spend-

ing a winter in such perfect health ; therefore, I should be unpardonable, were I, from mere idleness, to withhold my trifling services at the school ; after all, it is so little I can do in assisting my dear, valued friends."

"I don't know that," replied Lord Culross, who, possessing none of the talent and shrewdness so peculiar to Scotch people, was completely blinded by Janet's specious manner. "I wouldn't say that, Miss Janet ; Miss Lizzie Irving tells me you're just better than herself, at the school, yonder."

"I am deeply interested, and very anxious ; and, you know that, with the wish to accomplish an object, we, sometimes, acquire the power."

"You feel an interest in these poor children?"

"The greatest."

"And, do you think, now, that the school is quite as well managed as it ought to be?"

"As far as my experience goes, I should say, decidedly."

"I suppose you haven't seen much of this sort of thing?" enquired Lord Culross ; who, in consequence of the Kittlestainhaugh school owing its birth, in a great measure, to his exertions and liberality, was apt to look upon it as a sort of Phoenix, and to believe that, in establishing such a seminary, he had achieved what no one else had done.

"I have not, certainly, had an opportunity of forming a very extensive opinion, but the Kittlestainhaugh appears to me equal, if not superior, to those schools I have been in the habit of visiting. I mean that, at Merton Lodge, my cousin Sir Marcus Kingsbury's place, and those I have casually inspected whilst staying at the houses of other friends, or acquaintances," replied Janet, with unblushing countenance ; although there was not one word of truth in the whole sentence. The Kingsbury property boasted no such institution, and, if it had, Miss Irving was the last person, willingly, to spend her time in an occupation so foreign to her tastes and feelings.

Neither would she have dreamt of assisting, by her advice and services, those of her friends who might be, perhaps, more benevolently disposed. And, as she really had no particular object in view, it seems difficult to determine why she uttered so deliberate a falsehood; unless, indeed, she acted on the same principle as did a surgeon in the north of Devon, whom I once heard acknowledge as rather a good joke, that he used to persuade the old market-women to let him bleed and cup them, not for the benefit of the patients' health, but for the purpose of "keeping his hand in."

It may be, also, that Janet was not fully aware of her insincerity; for the practice of mendacity, if once indulged in, will (in common with all pernicious practises) gradually acquire such force and universal influence that, eventually, it becomes a fixed and settled habit; and persons, accustomed to give way to this blameable propensity, will often make false statements without the least intending, or even knowing it.

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"Do none such exist?"

"I have not heard of any."

"No reason, however, that there are none," thought Janet; then added, aloud, "If there are no works of this description to be met with, some one should undertake to write them."

"Ah, but who?"

"In this age of book-making, I imagine there could be no difficulty in finding numbers who would gladly do so. I'm not sure that I would not, myself. Splendid talents, you know, are not necessary," said Janet, laughing in her sleeve at her companion's great simplicity.

"No, no," he replied, internally; "you are a fine, clever, intelligent creature, but I doubt whether you could write such a book as that; still, the idea is not a bad one; I wish I knew anybody who could follow it up."

They had by this time reached Janet's home; she entered, without inviting him to follow; but while he lingered at the entrance, the door of

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The next day, Lord Culross again called, as it would appear, for the single purpose of once more discussing their former topic; for, he had scarcely seated himself, before he addressed Janet—

“Well, Miss Janet, have you been thinking about our conversation?”

“Yes,” replied Janet, amused by his pertinacity, “I have thought a great deal upon the subject.”

“And do ye think of trying your hand?”

“No; I have not courage—it requires so much for authorship in these days—to say nothing of discrimination in choice of the materials we employ, there must be style, language——”

“You’re quite right, Miss Janet; you’re perfectly correct—for if you don’t write so that the children (poor bodies) can understand, you know, there would be little use in giving them

the books to read; there looked to."

Janet had spent that review, lent to her by a she was, therefore, quit upon the topic, and she r

"The manner must not be varied according to the passages, the language didactic, lofty—in narrative concise—in description elaborate. Then, the imitator ought to be well and above all, imitation must fail; a writer loses his own of far higher value to an of imitating even to a clo

"Eh, what?" said Lord eyes to their widest extent her oration—"Where did

"I read a great deal, with a sort of modest, dov

"Do you?" enquired th

"Janet reads more than is, perhaps, necessary," interposed Mrs. Ramsay, in an uneasy tone—"It is, however, I believe the case with many of the young women of the present day. With us, it was very different."

"Well—I'm no great reader myself," replied his Lordship, "but for all that, I'm not one of those who say a woman should never open a book:—still, Miss Janet, it appears to me that what you were saying just now was more applicable to novels and romances, and that sort of thing, than school children's books: there, we want nothing but truth and common sense."

"Certainly; but we agreed to give them books of biography, histories of real life; and what is more romantic than real life?"

"I hardly agree with you; at least, nothing romantic, or out of the way ever happened to me."

"Nothing? Not, even your accession to the peerage?"

"That was unexpected, to be sure. Still, still it won't do to be making me a hero of romance; I'm not just calculated for one."

“ Oh, cried Janet, laughing, “ I’ve no such intention, I assure you : I merely quoted your case as an illustration of my somewhat hackneyed observation.”

“ *I* never heard it before;” answered Lord Culross, looking very wise.

“ Then, perhaps, without intending it, I have made an original remark.”

“ I dare say, you make many.”

Janet bowed gracefully enough, in acknowledgment of the compliment, and Lord Culross left the house, fully impressed with the notion of her superior talents.

Mrs. Ramsay was not, however, quite satisfied with that conversation : she was afraid, she observed to her sisters, that, hurried away by her high spirits (all young people have high spirits), Janet had been playing off Lord Culross, and it was determined to remonstrate on such improper conduct—accordingly, a very delicate and gentle hint was thrown out. Janet, of course, denied any such intention ; but, already

tired of her new plaything, she was careful, in future, to avoid similar exhortations. Her relations were delighted with her apparent docility, and, when next his Lordship afforded an opportunity, his praises of Miss Janet's talents were met by commendations of her gentleness.

For many years of his existence, Lord Culross had been plain David Irving, Laird of Drumattrie, whose rental reached about four hundred pounds per annum. He was an inoffensive being, called, by his friends, shy—by those who knew or loved him not, dull. His tastes were simple, he had, in fact, one occupation—farming ; one hobby—the school at Kittlestainhaugh ; one only amusement—to sit an hour with his old friends and distant kinswomen, Mrs. Ramsay and her sisters. Matrimony was never supposed to have entered into his calculations.

But a sudden, mighty vicissitude took place in David Irving's fortune. Through one of

those series of mortalities that when death seems never victims from one house and Lord Culross. The change, in the outward state of things remained the same. As Lord he had been voted awkward as Lord Culross, he was still Now, as formerly, farming with planting schools his greatest sole difference between his life consisted in the loss of had formerly so much enjoyed hours he had been wont to relatives now hung heavily it is not singular that the exerted to himself a wife, by way of deficiency, more than once his imagination.

Yet had two years elapsed assumed the name and state and he was still a single man

this time he exchanged his more lordly domicile for Drumattrie, and then it was Janet made so political a display of her philanthropy.—My readers have, no doubt, anticipated the event, and they will hear with less surprise than Janet did, that the object of her ambition, that which she had so vainly sought amidst the gaieties of London, was, at length, tendered for her acceptance, in a remote Scotch village.

She had considered her admirer as so very uninteresting a person that, excepting on the memorable outbreak of her mental powers, which had called forth a remonstrance from the alarmed Mrs. Ramsay, she had rarely noticed him at all, beyond a bow of recognition; and usually pursued her work in perfect silence during his long and almost daily visits. This reserve of manner had proved one of her principal attractions in Lord Culross's eyes: it was, he thought, so totally unlike the generality of girls; *Miss Janet* was evidently a

superior person, so entire duties; quiet, gentle and d be the very wife for him.

fond of children; so interest their tastes were manifestly i future harmony would be wi

Thus reasoned Lord Culr the medium of Miss Irving Janet, who, notwithstanding estate of twelve thousand declined the offer: all wor was, she could not bring he a man. But her cousins w refusal; in one voice, and c certainly not in one key, the advantages of the alliance, amazingly advanced their c Janet, almost deafened by not but feel that Mochru drawback of its owner's pre prove a pleasanter abode tha she, therefore, withdrew her

Lord Culross was made happy by the assurance of her affection; and from that moment, Janet thought only of the grandeur and magnificence she was to purchase by the surrender of her inclinations.

Nothing could be more perfect than Janet's *maintien* and appearance as a Bride. Her dress was of the most costly materials; her manner, at once, modest, yet collected; dignified, yet graceful—all was exactly as it should have been. She did not even omit the single tear-drop, which, while attesting her sensibility, neither dimmed her eye, nor left its trace upon her cheek. Shall we enquire what passed within?—It is hardly worth the trouble. No woman, who can, deliberately, and in the presence of her Maker, promise to love, and honour, and obey a man whom she believes inferior to herself, and whom she, therefore, must despise, deserves our interest, still less our admiration. And Janet, her own mistress, free, unfettered, yet in the bloom of youth, and

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Two days later
Irving wrote th

"I fear I must
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have been occupied, latterly. The fact is, that I am on the eve of changing my lot, and the necessary preparations have so much engrossed my attention that I feel perfectly bewildered; however, it is nearly over now, I am thankful to say. If newspapers find their way to so secluded a spot as Knowlescombe, you have been, perhaps, already apprized of these tidings; for, I am told, the report of my intended marriage with Lord Culross has appeared in all the public prints. The connexion is in every way desirable—Lord Culross is a most superior person, the owner of two splendid places, immensely rich, and devotedly attached to me; so that I enjoy the prospect of almost unalloyed happiness.

I trust you and Mr. D'Esterre continue to be pleased with Knowlescombe; to judge from your description it must be a really pretty spot, and, I should imagine, would suit *you*, Georgy, far better than Ringland.—Pray let me hear from you, whenever you find time to write, I shall always feel the greatest interest in you—and with kind remembrances (in which, I am sure, Lord Culross would join, were he aware of my writing)

I remain,

ever yours,

Kittlestainhaugh, Wednesday.

JANET IRVING."

Georgina was too much astonished by this abrupt communication to notice the unkind tone of her sister's letter.

"Perceval," she cried, "Janet is going to be married."

"Indeed! and to whom? I wish him joy whoever he may be—a precious bargain he will have," replied D'Esterre, taking the letter Georgina tendered him.

"Perceval, you forget Janet is my sister."

"And a very sisterly part she has acted by you."

"What do you mean?"

Perceval hesitated for a few seconds, and then almost electrified Georgina, by relating the history of Janet's treachery.

"Perceval, you must have misunderstood her—it never could have been as you describe."

"No, Georgy, there was no misapprehension; Janet proved herself a deliberate liar, and a malicious mischief-maker."

Georgina pressed her hand upon her heart—

you might almost have heard its beatings.—
Perceval perused the letter—

“It appears a good match, that is to say, if we may believe the account she gives.”

“What can have been Janet’s motives?” said Georgina, still intent upon Perceval’s unexpected information.

“It matters little—her artifice was unsuccessful, and the consequences have been injurious to herself alone: I believe it was her conduct, upon that occasion, which lost Miss Irving her station in Lady Kingsbury’s house.”

“Surely, you did not tell my aunt?”

“No; at least, not intentionally; but from some expressions Lady Kingsbury left fall, one afternoon, when sitting alone with me, I’m inclined to think that, in my delirium, I discovered what had passed: and, the circumstance of your aunt’s having so entirely discarded Janet would appear to corroborate the idea.”

“Poor Janet,” observed Georgina, unable, even at that moment, to think harshly of a being

she had so fondly loved happy in her marriage."

"Janet will never be h

"Why, my dear Perce

"Because, discontent envy—an envious temperment and curse—a punis—a curse to all around."

"I suppose it was Jan respecting that letter, wh her coming here?"

"Was there not suffici

"Alas! yes," replied

I wish you had told me v not guess your motive, a to—to—, in short, I was

"Is that the only ins judged me falsely, de Perceval, his mind rever regarding Lady Alicia St been unjust before?"

"Yes, once, I think— mistaken," answered Geo

“Do not say *hope*, rather believe, feel confident; for doubt is parent to mistrust, mistrust creates suspicion, and suspicion is the direst enemy to love. Besides, a mind such as yours should be above suspicion.”

“Perceval, I did not suspect, at least not willingly, but my mind was poisoned.”

“By your sister?”

“Not by Janet only.”

“But did she seek to undeceive you? Come speak the truth, did Janet try to set your mind at ease?”

“Perhaps,” replied Georgina timidly, “she was herself, misled.”

“Pshaw!” answered Perceval indignantly.

Could Janet but have known how thoroughly D’Esterre despised and hated her, it would almost have been sufficient punishment for all her misdemeanours.

CHAPTER

“THAT then is Mochrum with proud satisfaction and whose long tiers of window rays of the setting sun.

“Yes, Janet; and I’m pleased with your new place, enough, though rather me; and, certainly, not,” replied Lord Culross.

“How?” enquired his

“Too far off from ever ride or a walk, before your tations. However you will the same complaint; the

hand, within ten minutes' walk of the castle; and I've had a path cut through the shrubbery which saves the children a good half mile, at least; and it's just a pretty sight to watch them, coming and going, from the window of the green drawing-room, which, I reckon will be your sitting-room—a very pretty sight indeed."

Lady Culross was silent; in her own mind she had already determined that to close this foot-path should be one of her very first acts of government.

"There," continued her simple mate, "if you lean your head a *leetle* forward, you will catch a glimpse of the school-house."

"That square, plain, freestone building?"

"Exactly."

"It appears very near the house?"

"Close—close; nothing can be better placed. There is a gravel walk leads straight up to it, and in five minutes—less than five minutes you are there. Nothing can be better situated; and yet, would you believe it, I had the greatest trouble with Mr. Wren, the architect, both

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Kittlestainhouse

"It is very cold," and Janet hastily withdrew the hand Lord Culross had taken when concluding his speech.

"Why yes, it's not exactly summer weather ; the thermometer was two degrees below freezing point this morning, and I doubt whether it has risen much since."

"Surely, Mochrum lies very much exposed."

"What will you say, when you see Kilbogie Castle, Janet? That is exposed; stands on a rock almost perpendicular—with the sea on one side, and bare moor upon the other; and not a tree near, excepting a few Scotch Firs, and some young plantations of mine, that I am afraid will never come to anything. What will you say to that—eh, Janet?"

"That the sooner I get away the better."

"Certainly, Mochrum is the most to be preferred: still we mustn't give up Kilbogie altogether; but, I tell you what, Janet, we can just stay quietly here till the fine weather sets in, and then go to Kilbogie for the summer: it's

not, by any means, a bad climate in the summer months."

Janet made no reply ; intent in gazing from the carriage window, she did not even turn her head ; yet, so contracted was the view, that the long branches rattled against the plate glass, as they passed rapidly on.

" You seem greatly taken with that prospect, Janet. I don't understand these things much, but I've heard that the view on this side is the thing. See—there is the lake, and in the distance that line of mountains is thought to be really fine—but I don't understand these things, not I."

Still, Janet would not turn her head ; and when, at length, she did, it was not on hill or valley that her eye rested, but on Lord Culross, who had sunk back in a corner of the carriage—his eyes half shut—his fingers interlaced—while the thumbs moved in rapid, circular pursuit of each other. And the worldly minded Janet sighed ; for a lingering gleam of better

feeling told her, she had purchased grandeur and distinction at too high a price.

Janet found everything heavy that evening : the old-fashioned and massy furniture—her husband's conversation—the air of the apartment—and, worse than all, the weight upon her breast, as her thoughts strayed waywardly towards another, happier, humbler fire-side. "They are poor, very poor," she said inwardly, "but then Georgina loves the man she married; whilst *I*—pshaw—what is love to me? Romantic nonsense—silly, vain delusion, existing but in sickly brains, or fanciful imaginations. Let her be happy in her obscurity—mine is another sphere—wealth is my sceptre; aye, and a mighty sceptre, for it governs all; friendship, and love, and admiration will I summon to my side, and they shall heed my mandate—for when did money call in vain! Rank, too, is mine." (Here Janet passed her hand across her snowy forehead) "Yes, I have rank—and rank is power, the power of patronising—of mortifying, too.

And now, Lady Kingsbury, kind, considerate, affectionate relative, I will pay off old scores; not one slight, not one unkindness, shall be forgotten, or unrevenged! And you, Marcus, how shall I deal with you? Shall I resent your impertinence?—No—it is not worth while; you are beneath me—besides, through you, I can best mortify your mother. Therefore will I notice, patronise your wife; 'tis true, she was an Opera dancer—but what of that? A peeress can do anything. Yes—I will bring Opera dancers into fashion.”

“Janet, I’m really fearful we have travelled too fast. You looked flushed, and just now you put your hand to your head, as though it ached. D’ye think you’ll be able to go to the school to-morrow? If not, I’ll just send down word; for I know that the children will be expecting you, in their best clothes, of course; and it’s a pity they should be disappointed, poor young things. So just say, if you would rather put it off for a day?”

Janet started. "Oh, no; I shall be quite well, to-morrow. Pray do not notice me." A smile played upon her lip—Lord Culross did not feel altogether satisfied at the expression; he had never seen such an one upon her countenance before, and he asked himself anxiously, if it were possible so well-conducted a young person could look upon her liege lord with feelings of contempt.

* * * * *

"Janet, what a delightful day you have for your journey," observed Mrs. Ramsay to Lady Culross, one bright morning, about two months after her marriage.

"Fine day? yes, I believe the sun does shine; but, really, I am so delicate, and the mist rising from the lake—pray, Lord Culross, don't come into the room so frequently; you know I cannot bear the least air, and the open door half kills me."

"The carriage is quite ready," said Lord Culross, meekly.

"Very well. Go down—I will follow when I have mustered sufficient strength."

Lord Culross did as his lady bade him.

"My dear Janet," said the kind Mrs. Ramsay, "I wish you would suffer me to go with you."

"Thank you—I could not, on any account. My maid is the only person who understands my ailments," (Lady Culross coughed slightly) "and can be of the least use. Farewell. Lord Culross shall write."

Janet proceeded languidly to the carriage, which she entered with the assistance of her lord; who then, in obedience to her mandate, mounted the box, while the favourite Abigail placed herself beside her mistress. All being, at length, arranged, and the signal for departure given, the horses started off. They were bound for the English capital—Moorum had disagreed with Janet.

CHAPTER XVI.

It was one of those bright days—those soft, sweet, sunny days, when the young go forth, rejoicing in their strength, to revel in the beauties of the opening year—and even the dull, cold blood of age flows through the veins with something of youth's lustihood—when spring's voice is in the meadow, her breath upon the breeze—when the vast lap of earth is teeming with fertility—when flowers burst, and buds unfold—when birds sing cheerily, and childhood's voice rings high and clear—when all is rife with happiness and glee, for that the joyous spring is come; all save the weary invalid, who, from his tedious prison, watches the sun-

plays in silence round
gladsome echo murmur
part takes he in all the
spirits sink, his heart
season brings sad reflections
of former cheerfulness,
this uncheerfulness, this
shew how much he is

Maurice Arnold was
that in which he slept
failed to work the hope
he was come home to
large easy chair, propped
looked intently at some
placed upon a little table
not of them he thought
words were not wanted
the mind within

glistened, and all his countenance was bright with smiles—not the faint sickly smile we often see upon the faded lip of suffering, nor that irradiant beam which springs from holy joy, or pious confidence; but that sweet, sunny smile, that lightens in the eye, and plays around the mouth of those whose hopes are yet unchilled by disappointment—whose wishes dream their own fulfilling: such a look as Maurice Arnold's features had not worn since his Georgina's marriage had been finally arranged. For thought and memory do sometimes play fantastic antics in the sick man's chamber, filling the fevered brain with fancies and remembrances so vivid and so *real* that by-gone days become the present once again.

His mind had strayed back months and years: he was once more the healthy boy, the ardent youth, the hopeful lover. In imagination he retraced his early walks, and *she* was by his side; again he sauntered hours away, tending with her the little garden; he heard her

voice, he held her hand, and hung upon her smile, or fondly watched her as she moved amidst the flowers—herself the fairest, brightest of them all.

Maurice was buried in the past; and, as his mind became more forcibly impressed with these sad visions, he suddenly arose, and made a few short, rapid steps across the room. And the spell was in an instant broken. The sense of all his weakness came upon him, and with it came—the truth. *She was D'Esterre's wife*—and he, a dying man.

“Maurice,” cried Charlotte, who had been watching her brother with intense anxiety, “you are ill—faint; let me support you.”

“I shall be better, presently;” he replied, faintly, and tottered into the adjoining room.

The door remained ajar; Charlotte listened eagerly; but, except a few deep drawn sighs, no sound escaped. She ventured softly to the threshold—Maurice was on his knees. This was his last regret for earthly happiness. He

was henceforward spared all severe suffering ; his mind was kept in perfect peace, and he looked forward to his release as calmly as the child turns itself to sleep upon its mother's bosom.

Maurice had passed an easy, composed night, and Miss Rocket, who, with Charlotte, watched by his bed-side, retired to take some rest. Charlotte, however, lingered : the invalid was cheerful, described himself as feeling better than for some days previously ; yet something told her that he ought not to be left. Nor did he, with his usual thoughtfulness, insist on her withdrawing. Perhaps, the idea possessed them both.

" Charlotte," he said, " have you heard, lately, from Knowlescombe ?"

" I had a letter yesterday."

" May I hear it ?"

Charlotte read the letter ; not, however, without some misgiving : but, excepting at one paragraph, where Georgina, in her own warm affectionate manner, expressed her solicitude for him, he shewed no token of emotion.

Charlotte, never, :
much I loved her.

like a dream it seems

“ And you are hap

“ Happy? Inexpr
with joy, unspeakable

“ Shall I read to
alarmed at the exciten

“ Yes ; read me th
thians.”

Charlotte obeyed ;
gave utterance to tha
soling portion of the
reached the twenty-sec
drawn breath startled :

“ You are in pain, I
back the curtain, to a
air. His eyes were c
convulsions . . .”

sudden jirking of the muscles of the mouth. "Maurice, beloved brother, speak to me—Oh let me hear your voice once more!"

The heavy eyelids slowly rose, he cast towards his sister one fond, never-to-be-forgotten look—a faint and happy smile—and then the countenance was darkened, yet so calm and placid, Charlotte thought he slept. In truth, he did—the dreamless slumber of the grave!

There is no task more mournful than to search amongst the papers, books and other familiar things of one whom we have loved, and lost. Can we unlock the writing desk, or *escritoire*, and not reflect whose hand has often turned the key before? What a host of thoughts and feelings, too, come rushing on the mind as we unfold the different memoranda, so carefully preserved! Often we learn more of the deceased from these sad reliques than we ever knew before: thoughts, feelings and affections, till now never even guessed, are all at once

devolved upon his father
with heavy heart, and
eyes bedimmed with
trying occupation.

On opening the chest
she found little of an
for trifling debts that
letters he received at
away from home, and
description. One dried
and sealed, it had resembled
preceding Georgy's mother
that drawer contained
tress of glossy raven
tered round her open
she had netted for him
on whose blank page

his name—the note—the bunch of faded flowers?

Charlotte burst into an agony of tears: she had never known till now how deep had been her brother's love.

“Alas, alas!” she wildly cried—“surely this ill-fated attachment shortened his existence.”

A hand was softly placed upon her shoulder, when, turning, she beheld old Mr. Beechcroft, who had been frequently with Maurice during his long illness, and had now come over to perform the last sad ceremony, fixed for the following day.

Charlotte pointed to the drawer—

“I know it;” he said, “I have long known all that drawer so plainly proves—and I have, also, sometimes thought, with you, that to this bitter disappointment we may trace his early doom. But we are wrong in this conjecture—the germ of death had long been lurking in your brother's frame; and though, perhaps, the shock his feelings underwent at the period of

ultimately have been the
fore, of thus aggravating
loss, think of the calm
say, happiness, of his
enquire if, under other
have been the case.

contrast: now—he left
without a wish for life,
he left behind—but he
father, what thoughts and
what fear must have entered
his mind, also, what would
be his feelings at this moment

“Still,” replied Charles,
“I spared the wretchedness
of another.”

“The trial was needed
to be needful; yes, even

of torturing misery—even while his mortal nature quailed beneath the stroke—he saw, felt the wisdom of the dispensation: and, even then, adored the love which tore him from an earthly idol, and made him meet for an inheritance of light. In place, therefore, of vainly grieving for the past, let us consider what he is become—a blessed and rejoicing spirit, clothed with a glorious immortality; and remembering his pilgrimage below only to magnify the power which sustained his faltering steps, and the wisdom, which brought him thus safely to a haven of eternal rest.”

Weep not for Maurice Arnold! Breathe not for him a single sigh: he has exchanged a life of pain and disappointment for an Eternity, glorious, effulgent, teeming with everlasting joy: but there is one who claims our sympathy and challenges our tears—his sister, his twin sister; she, whose warm heart, cast in one mould with his, bore all its impress—reflected every thought—partook in every feeling.

Oh, heavy was the sense of dreariness that pressed on Charlotte Arnold's mind, when first she *realised* her loss, and knew and felt that the loved form, whose birth had been coeval with her own, was now a lifeless clod—a mass of mouldering dust ; that the true heart, whose every beating had been known to hers, lay dull and motionless ; and that the soul, with whom her spirit had ever held such full and unrestrained communion, was now beyond all human cares—all earthly hope and joy. Maurice was gone ! And she yet lingered—lingered in loneliness and unshared grief.

Amongst the members of the family, Charlotte vainly looked for sympathy ; at least, such sympathy as her heart asked ; they had loved Maurice, but not as she had loved him : besides, they could look forward—life lay still before them, and their bright hopes and buoyant expectations led them away from present sorrow. But Charlotte felt as though her day of life were passed and gone ; she was

a denizen of this world, and all its duties were yet binding—its sorrows yet in store ; but, for its joys—oh, what had she to do with joy ? Its meteor beam was quenched for her. Like Maurice, her affections had been blighted—but, like him, she had not found an early tomb !

Still, although heart-sick, and suffering within, her outward bearing was ever calm, placid, almost cheerful ; for she was one of those characters, at once so rare and beautiful, which even sorrow cannot taint with selfishness !—Why should she damp her sisters' spirits ? Why tarnish gaiety, that even of itself must too soon pass away ?

Charlotte was sitting in the garden ; and, in spite of all her efforts, her mind would fasten on the past—her thoughts revert to other times—when Maurice, strong in hope and love, would dwell unweariedly upon his future happiness ; and when, although William Beechcroft had not disclosed his sentiments, she guessed and gloried in them.

had been, for both the
Atherley. They met
thick and rapidly; for,
had linked the family
Arnold's friend—the co
all but the brother of
croft, while he held his
hand in his, reflected, the
the engagement formed
grief and disappointment
birth had, he felt, through
her brother—and now
earthly one, had given
agitated, Charlotte was

“You have taken me
said—“I had not the
seeing you.”

“I'm aware of that,

ness of my appearance has only agitated you ; but you must not chide me, dearest Charlotte, since it was principally on your account I came !”

“On mine, William?” asked Charlotte, while there sprung up in her mind a glimmering hope that some change of a favourable nature had taken place in his prospects.

“Yes ; I learnt what has occurred—I knew how much you must be suffering—and—and, I thought that as, in any trial of mine, my heart would naturally turn to you—yours, I mean, I hoped it might be in my power to—to, in short, Charlotte, I felt you must be miserable, wanting support and comfort, and—I could not stay away.”

“Alas ! dear William,” replied Charlotte, almost choking with her agitation, “your presence does but multiply my grief—for the conviction you still take so deep an interest in me, while it imparts a pleasure I never thought to taste again, opens afresh that wound which had, I hoped, begun to close.”

“Charlotte, dearest, dearest Charlotte, listen to me—my sentiments for you remain unchanged—nothing can alter them——”

“William, you must not use that language—indeed, you must not—hopeless love should be forgotten love.”

“Never—never while I breathe; and now I come, once more, to plead my passion—once again, to beg, entreat you will, at least, renew the engagement. Suffer that to stand, dear Charlotte, even though years may pass away before we see its blissful termination. Still, let that link exist between us; we may then correspond, although we do not meet. Will you, will you grant my prayer?”

Sorely was Charlotte tempted; but she loved William too truly—too disinterestedly to involve him in an entanglement, all but hopeless, and yet perhaps for life: and a firm but gentle negative was all his earnest pleading could extract.

He left her almost angry; and when, on his

departure Charlotte, with tottering footsteps sought her chamber, that there in private she might weep and pray, it seemed as if another drop of bitterness had just been added to a cup, already full to overflowing.

CHAP'

SHORTLY after Maur
Charlotte accepted G
Knowlescombe, Miss
removed to Eastbeac
Berrington was transp
severely, but, as he sai
had originated with M
persuade her he was
To do her justice, Re
old friend's comfort w
she have appeared in
cumstances, it must h
"Well, Major, what

the book from which she had been reading was totally without the power of rivetting his attention. "What are you thinking of, I say?"

"Of Georgina; it was here she first met D'Esterre."

"A very good thing too—you should not look so grave about it."

"The marriage has turned out very differently from its first promise."

"Yes, it can't be denied they're under a cloud just now, but that will pass away; Mr. D'Esterre's affairs will right all in good time, if Georgina has only firmness and influence enough to keep him to their present plan. I mean to write to her on the subject, I fear he is inclined to vacillate—no power of self-denial; like all other men, can't bear privation."

"Take care what you say, D'Esterre may see the letter."

"No harm if he does."

"Truth is not always palatable," said the

better for us all if v
it. And, by the v
news?"

"What news?"

"Why, that Marine
and is now to be occur

"Indeed? And by

"That's the questi
it seems, bought it, a
thorough repair; bu
reside there himself e
point the Eastbeach y
down a bride, or wheth
his sister, who is a wide
but my own opinion is

"Who is Mr. Jacks

"Nobody knows; l
single, he is supposed

"It will be a pretty place when complete, the garden is such an advantage," said Major Berrington with a half sigh.

"I hear it is to be done in the best possible style; Griffiths has the carpentering part of the job."

"That, then is the reason he has neglected to send home my flower-stand, as he promised last week; and my plants are dying for want of light."

"Very likely; trades-people have no feeling about breaking their word, and Griffiths is no better than his neighbours. And I don't suppose you'll get your flower-stand for a month, now he's got this house to attend to—however, I'll call and see what I can do by speaking to him—so good morning, Major; any message for Georgina?"

"Nothing but my love."

On leaving Major Berrington, Miss Rocket strolled for a short time upon the cliff, and, after administering a severe reproof to a nursery

Now it happened that the aforesaid Marine V that, at the moment gate, and house-door open. She had idle time not employ it in the ins She would thus run a the carpenter, and be a Major Berrington's business ascertain the final destination

On her first entrance either to gratify her curiosity admiration ; indeed, she for, from the sitting-room removed, and the wind so that, with the exception other offices, the whole the house was enveloped



upper story met with her warm approval; the rooms were light, airy, cheerful, well disposed, everything in short that could be wished.

One, in particular, a small boudoir-like seeming place with a French window opening into a balcony, perfectly enchanted her; and she staid so long admiring the view; and enjoying the air and sea breezes, that one o'clock struck without her heeding it; nor did she remark the loud shutting of the street-door.

"Well," she said, at last, stepping in from her aërial situation, "this is all very pretty, and vastly well arranged; not intended for a lodging-house, certainly; but it won't do for me to be loitering away my morning in this manner, I must be off. If I don't find Griffiths here, I must go to his own house. An exceedingly pretty paper that, indeed."

Rebecca once more perambulated the several rooms; and, not encountering the person she was in search of, or, in truth, any workmen, determined to leave the spot that had so en-

chanted her. But her resolution was ineffectual: on proceeding to the principal entrance, she found the door closed and locked from the outside.

"Very strange," thought Miss Rocket, beginning to feel uncomfortable; "it was open but ten minutes ago; I must try the other." An equally fruitless effort—the lock had been removed, and the door nailed up. Rebecca was completely caught, locked up and encaged. The workmen had evidently gone home to dinner, and, previous to their departure, had secured the premises.

"A pretty piece of business, this; here I am for an hour, at the very least," said she, re-ascending the staircase, after making sundry efforts to obtain her freedom.

"After all, an hour soon slips away; I might be worse off—if I had but something to sit down upon."

The hour did elapse, but not very quickly; for Time is an unaccommodating old gentleman,

—when we wish him to go fast, he lags ; and flies when we gladly would arrest his course for ever.

Two o'clock struck, Miss Rocket endeavoured to assume a careless, unconcerned appearance. Two o'clock struck—and a quarter after, and the half hour, and three, and four, and five—and still Rebecca was encaged. Not as before, good-humouredly submitting to her fate, but in a state of high excitement, for it was clear she must pass the night in her present denuded quarters.

She bruised her fingers, and destroyed her gloves, in vain attempts to force aside the planks that boarded up the windows ; (those of the offices were secured by iron bars, placed too near together to admit the egress of a much slighter form than hers;) and she screamed until hoarse, in the as futile hope of attracting notice from without. The path that led to Marine Villa was no great thoroughfare ; the house was situated in the midst of a garden,

whose thick plantations screened it entirely from the public eye ; thus, therefore, although the few stragglers who did occasionally pass the gate, might have caught a faint dubious echo of the prisoner's not very melodious voice, they had no means of ascertaining whence the sound proceeded. Rebecca was really in an exceedingly uncomfortable situation, and, probably, the most tantalising part of the whole business was that, from one of the side windows she could see, and she believed distinguish, the different persons walking on the Esplanade.

"Yes," she exclaimed, "that is Mrs. Greenwood ; I am confident it is, I know Maria's gait so well ; and that shawl and bonnet I could swear to—now they are stopping ; if I could only make them hear. How stupid they are — Mrs. Greenwood must be deaf—and though Maria's head is turned this way, she doesn't see the handkerchief I am waving. And those two girls walking away at such a

rate, those must be my nieces—I'll be bound it's Jane and Susan, asking every one they meet what's become of me. I dare say the silly things will go and have me cried next, and then I shall never be able to put my nose out without having all the boys in the town after me as if I were a mad dog with a tin tea-kettle tied to my tail! Foolish girls, why do they not go home and keep quiet."

The Miss Arnolds were, indeed, exceedingly alarmed by their relative's strange and mysterious disappearance; and, naturally enough, enquired for her in every possible direction; and, as the cliff was the last place where Rebecca had been seen, it was generally imagined she had come to an untimely end.

Miss Rocket passed a sleepless night, and with the early dawn, like sister Anne, she was stationed at the window, watching for her deliverers—that is to say, the workmen. Alas! she watched in vain—no such welcome persons came: a boy, engaged in keeping the birds from

the corn, whistled as he passed the outer gate; and a donkey brayed, whilst browsing on the thistles in the neighbouring lane; but neither mason, painter, nor carpenter appeared.

All sorts of frightful apprehensions rushed into Rebecca's mind. The men would not return that day, nor perhaps the next, nor even the one after that—in a word, would they return at all? And what must become of her thus shut up in an uninhabited house? No contingency, however terrifying, appeared beyond the bounds of probability. Even Count Ugolino's miserable fate seemed to threaten her—she might be starved to death!

The stout-hearted Rebecca was completely overcome, and she rushed about the rooms in a state bordering upon distraction. Oh! how she loathed the apartments she had formerly so much admired, how earnestly she wished Mr. Jackson had never purchased Marine Villa—above all, how she deprecated the foolish curiosity that had brought her into this dilemma;

and how solemnly she vowed that, if she could but get away, she would never enter empty houses more. At last, quite overpowered by anxiety and fear, and worn out by a night of sleeplessness, she sunk down in a state of torpid stupor.

Shortly before noon, the gate bell was violently pulled—it rang a peal of joy to poor Rebecca. Some person evidently wished to enter, and, on finding their present method ineffectual, would, of course, seek other means. At all events, whilst the new comer waited for admission, she might contrive to make her screaming heard. Full of this gladdening hope, Miss Rocket once more regained the window and prepared to shout. But this exercise of Rebecca's lungs was unnecessary. She saw with indescribable delight the gate thrown open, and a neat looking, middle aged man, habited in black enter the garden. He was followed, and, indeed, had been admitted, by the master workman. Here was deliverance: Rebecca

gave one aspiration of gratitude ; and then, overpowered by the unexpected change, fell on her face to the ground and burst into a flood of tears.

“ Yes, sir,” observed the workman, whilst unlocking the house door, “ we took the workmen off yesterday as soon as ever Mr. Jones got your letter ; but it won’t make any great difference in finishing the job : they can be put on again the minute you’ve fixed the colour for the wainscot.”

“ Very good, very good—yes, this is all right enough—that paper might have been better matched, and that yellow is too bright ; too bright by half ; you must give it another coat of paint to make it look like oak. But—eh—what—who have we here ?” he exclaimed in much surprise, as Rebecca, looking like some poor crazy Jane, rose from her prostrate position.

“ My name is Rocket—Miss Rocket, and I came in——”

“ Rocket !” interrupted the workman, than she had ever done before.

"Rocket! bless me, if that isn't the name of the unfortunate lady as jumped off the cliff and drowned herself for love. Sure, ma'am, you can't be she?"

"No," replied she, proudly, "I never did anything so foolish. It was bad enough, in all conscience, to get myself locked up for the night in an empty house: but as for drowning myself for love——"

"Did you pass the night here? Dear me, you must have found it very unpleasant," said Mr. Jackson, with a slight shiver.

"Not particularly agreeable."

"But, how did it happen?"

"Why, sir, you see I wanted to know——" began Miss Rocket, then, suddenly recollecting that the owner of the Villa might think her motive in entering his premises savoured of impertinent curiosity, she stammered a few words respecting a carpenter and Major Berrington's flower-stand, and, wishing Mr. Jackson good morning, took her departure, feeling smaller

"A very strange business this, and as singular an occurrence as I ever heard of. I hope there's nothing in it—no danger of house-breaking, can't be connected with a gang, think you?" said Mr. Jackson, filled with the London dread of thieves and burglaries.

"No, no, nothing of that sort; but 'tis a queer sort of story," answered the workman, with a hearty laugh.

Miss Rocket was received by her young relatives with mingled feelings of delight, astonishment, and, ultimately, amusement.

"Yes, yes, young ladies, it's all very well for you to laugh and giggle at the account of my adventure; but, if you had spent a whole night in an empty house, shivering and shaking with cold and fright, you wouldn't think it any jesting matter, I can tell you. And then, just think what an awkward story it will make—I shall become the laughing-stock of Eastbeach."

"Tell the story yourself, tell it as a good joke, and then the laugh will be with, not against, you," urged Jane.

"I believe you're right ; grown people as well as children are fond of playing follow the leader. What letter is that?"

"One from Belinda."

"Aye, and what does she say? As much nonsense as usual?"

"More ; and worse than nonsense. It's full of the account of a ball."

"A ball? So soon after poor Maurice's death."

"You know, she was never famous for much feeling."

"Well, let me see it."

"Won't you take some refreshment first?"

"Yes, some tea ; he can bring it here."

"I should advise something more substantial after so long a fast ; cold meat, or——"

"No, I'm so faint and thirsty I don't feel as if I should ever touch meat again."

"I wonder," said the youngest Miss Arnold, who had been until now pondering over the story of her aunt's disasters ; "I wonder you did not think of climbing up the chimney."

“ If I had, what good would it have done? It wouldn’t have been of any use to have jumped down like a cat, expecting to alight on my feet.”

“ But the roof of the house is quite visible from the parade—some one might have seen you.”

“ And taken me for some animal escaped from Mr. Wombwell’s menagerie, I suppose. However, I don’t think it likely I should ever have made my way out, for I’m not quite slim enough for a chimney sweeper, and to have been wedged up in a dirty sooty chimney would have been worse than what did happen. Just think, too, what a piece of work to get me down again : almost as bad as the time when I was dragged through the window of Mr. D’Es-terre’s carriage. How they did pull and haul—I shall never forget it, I didn’t recover it for a month at least. But where is Bell’s letter?”

"DEAR JANE,

"I ought to have written long ago, but the fact is, I have been so taken up with the preparations for a splendid ball at Almack's that I have had time for nothing else. You must know we had the greatest difficulty in procuring tickets. I know the Flighs failed altogether, although they now declare they never tried to get them, and we got ours as a great favour, through the interest of a friend of mine. I can't tell you what a fright I was in about it, for they never came till quite late in the evening; fortunately, we had prepared our dresses (for it was a fancy ball), very sweet things, indeed. I went as a Virgin of the Sun, P— as a Spaniard; mine was rose-colour and sea-green, with an enormous gold sun upon my bosom, and a quantity of different coloured feathers on my head, not in a plume, but forming a sort of chaplet—I also wore my garnets and topazes; and I may without vanity say, I was in good looks. ('What an object she must have been!' exclaimed Rebecca.) Gustavus hired his costume from a warehouse, but it was exceedingly becoming and he made an excellent Alonzo.

The rooms were but thinly filled: Lady Fligh insists that, owing to its being so late in the sea-

son, nobody is in town, and that that is the reason we got our tickets; but I don't believe a word of it. She says, also, the company is considered to have been far from select, and this may be true, for certainly there was no one there I ever saw before; and a lady next whom I was seated turned away her head in the rudest manner whenever I happened to address her; I know it is not customary for strangers to speak, but really, at such a place, she need not have been so punctilious, so that it must have been ignorance and ill-breeding. Of course, knowing nobody, I found it very dull; but the worst of all was that, on looking towards Gustavus, who had walked across the room, to try and find out some of the people's names, to my horror I found that one of his moustachios had dropped off, and although I made all sorts of faces, and passed my fan across my mouth over and over again, I could not make him understand. At last, he saw himself in one of the pier glasses, and then, to my great relief, made his retreat. We did not get home until late, and were dead tired and very hungry, for they give no refreshments worth speaking of at these balls; and P— declares he wishes he had kept his money in his pocket; I am of another way of thinking, for it is *something* to say we have been at Almack's. Lady Fligh declares this is not the real

Almack's where all the fashionable people go—but this is all her envy. I, who was there, must be the best judge.

“London is becoming hot and disagreeable: I want P—to take a trip to the continent; but he is grown stingy—even goes so far as to say that, if we go down to Eastbeach on a visit to you, we must travel by the mail; which absurd fancy, my dear Jane, puts our meeting out of the question for the present, as it would not do for ‘Mrs. Gustavus Pratt’ to travel in so vulgar a manner! Good bye; love to all.

“Your affectionate sister,

Monday, Willow Villa.

“BELINDA PRATT.”

“Do you ever hear anything of the D’Esternes? I suppose they will never be able to shew their faces in the fashionable world again. I feel for him, but really Georgina was so conceited and gave herself such airs, I think she quite deserved to be well taken down. I saw Lord Olivius Yerfourd at the ball, but he only stared when I bowed—evidently did not know who it was—I suppose owing to my fancy dress.”

“Ah,” said Miss Rocket, “just as great a fool as ever. But I suppose I mustn’t talk of

nine days' wonder."

"Aye, Jane, but th
However, everybody
in their life, and I'm
the world. How stiff
if I don't have a rh
conclusion."

CHAPTER XVIII.

THAT pretty picturesque cottage, covered with roses, ivy, and passion-flower—is Knowlescombe—and the individual so intent upon the arrangement of that flower-bed, Perceval D'Esterre. Perceval, his complexion a little darker and his figure rather more robust than in the days of his fashionable celebrity: but health flushes on his cheek, and gladness lights his eye—and the glance he casts from time to time towards the open window of the little sitting-room bespeaks affection.

“Come out, Georgy, I can’t get on without you. Come out, and tell me, where you like to have those myrtles placed.”

Georgina is in no great hurry to obey; she is engaged in one of those important tasks housewives find so engrossing: and when, on a second appeal from Perceval, she does lay by her occupation and place herself beside him, her whole manner and appearance, strikingly, give token of assured happiness and confiding love.

Another person joins them; an aged, stooping man, whose eyes are dim, whose footsteps fall uncertainly, but on whose features sit contentment and placidity—and, holding by his hand, a laughing, rosy little girl, who feels quite proud of “taking care of grandpapa.” Georgina’s anxious wishes are accomplished; her father is, for life, beneath her roof; that, too, at Perceval’s suggestion.

It may not be denied, Mr. D’Esterre was finally determined on this step by a threatened revival of Lady Gertrude’s old and fondly cherished scheme of a united establishment; but as he did not impart this to Georgina, she

looked upon his invitation to her father as a token of affection ; and her happiness was ten-fold increased by the delightful notion—women are not particularly clear-sighted on such occasions ; nor, perhaps, men either.

Georgina, however, needs no evidence of D'Esterre's attachment ; she has, fairly, won his love—won it by her patience, her gentleness, her unvarying love for him—it may be, also, by her firmness in refusing to leave England. For, although vexed at having his wishes thwarted, he could not but reverence the motive of her opposition : and the steadiness with which she adhered to the path of duty, notwithstanding all it cost her, producing struggles which even he could not be blind to, gave birth to feelings of respectful admiration he had not believed her capable of inspiring, and which formed the basis of rational, and yet devoted, love.

It was well for Georgina—it was well for both of them, she shewed herself thus resolute: had she listened to the suggestions of her

weaker nature, there is every probability to fear D'Esterre had long ago become an irretrievably lost character. To a man of his tastes and habits a residence abroad would have proved as, if not more, expensive than remaining in his native land; whilst the constant excitement of a continental life would have been little favourable to domestic happiness. As it is, during the five years elapsed since they took up their residence at Knowlescombe, a considerable portion of his debts have been got rid of; ere very long, they will be able to return to Ringland; and meanwhile they are perfectly contented.

"Love in a cottage! What an antique notion!"

I may not contradict you, my fastidious critic—yet moderate your strictures, I beseech you; for indeed, indeed, I have tried hard to strike out something new; for well, I know, that splendid marriages, death-bed scenes, and all the other ordinary modes of terminating works,

of this description are stale and hackneyed. Once, to be sure, I hoped I had succeeded, and half proposed to write a tale, whose heroine should close her multitude of sorrows and disasters by marrying, neither a peer nor a commoner—a man of neither wealth nor poverty—but—a Bishop! Something quite novel, I am confident. But then—to make a Bishop figure as a bridegroom—oh, it would never do. My elder readers would have said such a consummation savoured of disrespect—the younger ones of want of interest—so I gave up the original idea.

Two days after Major Berrington's arrival at Knowlescombe, Georgina knocked at the door of Mr. D'Esterre's study.

"May I come in, Perceval?"

"Surely," replied he, in a tone that shewed he considered the interruption very seasonable. "Well, Georgy, what is your pleasure?"

"I want you to exert your interest with government."

"My interest with government! My dear, I have none."

"Nay, nay, your application to Mr. W. availed in getting poor Harry Dormer's sentence mitigated."

"True; but interest had nothing to do with that; Harry Dormer's case was a very clear one—I wrote to W. of the Home Office, simply stating the facts, he laid the case before his principal, and justice was done the poor fellow, but *interest* had no share in the transaction."

"But have you really no interest with government?"

"None, whatever, Georgy: but, what is it you wish to have done, and in what quarter?"

"The Chancellor is I believe the channel. I want a Crown living for Charlotte Arnold."

"A Crown living for Charlotte Arnold? Is she then going to take orders? Well, the profession would suit her admirably—she would, no doubt, write capital sermons: as it is, when

she was here last year, I used to think she longed to favour me with an occasional lecture."

"Nay, Perceval, I am sure Charlotte would never have dreamt of lecturing you."

"If she had, it would have been in vain; you would hardly, I suppose, have chosen such an encroachment on your especial prerogative, eh, Georgy?"

Georgina looked a little grave. "Do I often lecture you?"

"Not so often as I deserve."

"And will you do what I ask about this living for William Beechcroft?"

"William Beechcroft!"

"Yes, you know, I told you the whole story. He and Charlotte were to have been married, but the living on which William reckoned was given away."

"And the engagement broken off—I remember, perfectly. Are they still attached?"

"Papa says Charlotte is altering very much. It is, really, a sad business, and if anything can be done—"

"I would gladly do it. Charlotte is a nice girl, quite one of my favourites."

"Besides, Perceval, William is son of dear old Mr. Beechcroft, and that ought to give you an interest in him."

"Why, Georgy?"

"Because, he married us."

"You think that a sufficient reason to ensure my regard; upon my word, you are growing very conceited."

"No, I am not conceited, but I am proud, exceedingly proud, almost the proudest woman in England; and I think with good reason."

"I see," rejoined Mr. D'Esterre, with an air of much complacency, "that you are determined your client's suit shall be successful, and, therefore, press into the service the auxiliary which, next to gold, is most influential—Flattery."

"Indeed, dearest Perceval, I use a still more powerful weapon, one that is said to be omnipotent—Truth; and I shall be greatly dis-

appointed, if, after all, I do not win my cause."

"But if I have no interest with the Chancellor?"

"Have you none elsewhere?"

Mr. D'Esterre considered for a few minutes. "I once chanced to be of service to a son of the Bishop of C—, and that son, I observe by the 'Post,' is lately returned to this country from the East Indies; perhaps, an application to the Bishop, through him, might be of some avail."

"Then make it, dearest, pray make it without loss of time; you know not what happiness you would confer on me."

Perceval began arranging his paper, he looked towards the window, it was growing dark.

"Stay," said Georgina, "I will give you more light," and she drew up the blind.

He followed her with his eye, "Maurice Arnold's sister has a strong claim on me," he murmured half aloud.

"What did you say?" enquired Georgina, returning to his side. But he was already busy with his letter.

The application proved successful—within a few months after the above conversation, William Beechcroft was inducted to a living. Georgina's happiness was now complete.

"Pray what is become of Miss Rocket?"

Miss Rocket and the Miss Arnolds continue to reside at Eastbeach. In accordance with Jane's sensible advice, Rebecca told the history of her adventure in Mr. Jackson's house as an amusing story, and, as had been predicted, the laugh was on her side. Still, it was a considerable time before she could shew herself in public, or hear empty houses mentioned with composure; and longer yet, ere she could be induced to tolerate the owner of Marine Villa, or call upon his sister.

But the ice once broken, an acquaintance commenced which fast ripened into intimacy of so close a nature as to give rise to a very

singular report, namely, that a marriage between the families is on the tapis, and the contracting parties are said to be no other than Miss Rocket and Mr. Jackson ! The lady, however, staunchly denies the fact—invariably asserting that if Mr. Jackson's attentions mean anything they must be considered as directed towards one of her nieces, who, without a dissentient voice, agree in this opinion.

Nevertheless, it is a certain fact that Rebecca's philippics against matrimony have latterly become less frequent and less severe, she has even been heard to remark that a happy union is not a thing existing only in imagination ; that, probably, there would be many such if people were more cautious in their choice, especially, if they did not marry at so premature an age. She talks, also, of the defenceless, helpless state of unprotected women ; has become fond of walking on the Beach alone, and, when overtaken and joined by an acquaintance, seems to consider the interruption to her

maiden meditations highly disagreeable—all of which, I must confess, looks very suspicious : and there is another reason which strengthens the probability of Rebecca's change of state—not long ago, she received an addition of fortune by the death of an old uncle ; she is, therefore, an object of attraction in one sense, if in no other : and there are not wanting those who say that no woman willingly remains unmarried ; still, for my own part, I am inclined to think the rumour incorrect.

Lord Culross's astonishment and dismay on discovering the great mistake he had made in marrying Janet Irving, I shall not undertake to shew. Nor will I weary my readers by describing the many abortive efforts the poor man made to mould his lady into something like his notion of a well conducted wife. It is, generally believed that a sharp fit of sickness, the only one his lordship was ever known to have, and which occurred about three weeks after the fatal knot had been for ever tied, was the result

of the first; and the successful issue of the latter proves itself by the circumstance that, while he is a complete nonentity in his own house, Lady Culross holds the reins, and guides them with an entire disregard of her lord's wishes and opinions.

In London, she leads the *ton*; at Mochrum, her friends, and her friends only, are permitted to appear; and these are of the most exclusive stamp, the élite of rank and fashion. The school-house is demolished, and the path-way through the grounds, on which Lord Culross so much prided himself, closed up.

In town, or country, Janet moves the centre of a brilliant galaxy of rank and fashion—she is admired, caressed, and courted; she sees her early aspirations granted, her ambitious wishes all accomplished.—Is Janet happy? Oh, no, no; the black spot is on her heart and in her brain, poisoning each thought, corroding every feeling—something she finds in every person's lot surpassing hers—there is no happiness

though her smile, bland and bewitching though it seem --and the light that dances in her brilliant eye, speaks not the language of the soul within,—there, all is darkness, discontent, and murmuring.

THE ENLIOUS SPIRIT NEVER CAN KNOW PEACE.

THE END.



